anata

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by TumblingTroublesomeTumbleweeds

Summary

Kakashi has decided to stealth date his way into Iruka's future.

…

Snapshots of Kakashi and Iruka being totally married even though Iruka doesn't exactly realize that they're totally married. Neither does the rest of Konoha. But Kakashi does.

Notes

There's a lot of "Iruka doesn't realize he and Kakashi are dating because of Kakashi's bad communication skills". But what about Kakashi being completely aware that Iruka is unaware that Kakashi is stealth dating him until Iruka has adjusted to the idea of them actually dating?

There really is not much of a timeline to follow with these.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hatake Kakashi glances at the teacher laying on the grassy hill overlooking the river. It's a bit of an unusual spot for the teacher and an unusual hour.

"It's a bit past the proper bedtime for Academy senseis, isn't it?" Kakashi calls out, changing his direction to join Umino Iruka on the grass.

"One could say the same about Rokudaimes, Kakashi-san," Iruka sits up. His tone is in line with their usual banter but his expression is distracted.

"You seem troubled, Iruka-sensei," Kakashi sits next to him.

Iruka sighs, "it's nothing, really"

"Maa, sensei, nothing sure seems to have dulled the light in your eyes"

"Don't worry about me, Kakashi-san," Iruka sighs again and Kakashi inwardly cheers at the fact that he's not being sama'd to hell and back by at least one person who isn't one of Naruto's friends. "What about you? I remember you were equally troubled by the gift situation but then seemed to come to a decision"

Kakashi studies the teacher. Ever since Kakashi made the decision to subtly coax Iruka into accepting the idea of an actual relationship together instead of their friends with benefits situation, Kakashi regularly pushes the boundaries of the level of physical contact Iruka allows.

"Let me borrow your lap for a moment, sensei," Kakashi says lazily, shifting to lay his head on Iruka's thighs. He can feel the warmth from the younger man against his masked cheek and resists the urge to nuzzle.

"K-Kakashi-san!" Iruka waves his hands frantically but makes no move to shove Kakashi off, "this…what would people say if they saw this?"

"Who is around to see at this hour?" Kakashi says. Iruka sighs and

shakes his head. “And thanks to you, sensei, I had a solution”

“I’m not sure why that’s been happening so often,” Iruka huffs, hand straying absently to Kakashi’s hair. “Even Lord Kazekage said something similar,” Kakashi closes his eyes and allows the gentle hand to settle his thoughts.

“You just have a way, sensei,” Kakashi says. And it’s true. There’s always been something about Iruka’s presence that has a way of helping Kakashi sort through his issues, even if Iruka isn’t giving him actual advice.

“I don’t know about that, Kakashi-san,” he laughs softly.

“I do,” Kakashi turns onto his back to grin up at Iruka, even if the younger man can’t see it. “So now the biggest worry on my mind is gone, thanks to you, Iruka-sensei”

“No longer the worst Hokage in history thanks to me?” Iruka teases lightly.

“Nope,” Kakashi laughs. “Did Konohamaru ever catch you on camera?”

“Eventually,” he laughs. Kakashi brings his hand up to gently brush against the prominent scar. Iruka blushes a pretty shade of red. “It just took a little while to figure out how to define our relationship,” Kakashi thinks there seems to be a lot of that in Iruka’s life, “Konohamaru, he had to put up with me. I’m really not good at those things”

“I heard Naruto asked you to stand in as his father,” Kakashi says, allowing his hand to fall across his chest, “I’m glad”

“He was teasing me about still being single,” he shakes his head. “Talk about making me feel old”

Kakashi bites back the words he really wants to say.

We could change that fact, sensei

“Hm. He cares about you. It’s only natural to worry about one’s precious people”

“It’s strange,” Iruka says, glancing at the water. “Naruto has so many good friends, friends from all over. I remember his early days at the

Academy and how desperate he was to fit in. It feels like a lifetime ago that you were rescuing us in the back hills because Naruto went to raid a battle site for a trophy he could bring back to make friends and now the Kazekage is fretting over what to get him as a wedding gift. And Hinata. She was such a shy little thing who would stare at Naruto silently, and if I'm being quite honest, rather creepily from a distance and now she's bowing and calling me father. And tomorrow they're going to be married"

"Because of you, Iruka-sensei," Kakashi says.

"Hm?"

"That capacity for love, the ability to see the heart of his enemies, that's because you were able to see into his heart. He learned that from you"

Iruka shakes his head. "What Naruto does, it's not something that can be learned"

"No," Kakashi agrees, "but it has to be recognized and nurtured. If you had never noticed him, if he continued being neglected at best and hated at worst by everyone in the village, well, even the kindest person would break"

"You give me too much credit, Kakashi-san"

"You don't give yourself enough, Iruka-sensei"

Iruka doesn't respond but Kakashi can see the doubt etched into every one of Iruka's features.

"So if it's not Konohamaru's video, what's keeping you awake?"

"You're really not going to let this drop, are you?"

"Nope!" Kakashi grins with a wink. "Tell me everything"

Iruka exhales through his nose, glancing down at Kakashi and gently running his fingertip along the part of the scar bisecting his eyebrow.

"The Vice Principal Exam"

"Ah," Kakashi hums. "You know how I feel about you taking it"

"Yes. But-"

“I’m going to speak frankly and quite possibly a little harshly,” Kakashi sits up and holds Iruka’s gaze. “You sabotage yourself”

“Huh?”

“You sabotage yourself. I don’t know why. Is it because you’re afraid? Is it because you don’t think you can do it?” Kakashi gently grips his chin. “I’ve watched you, Iruka. You turned down the option to take a promotion for jonin, to tokubetsu jonin, and now this”

“I…” Iruka tries to look away, but Kakashi doesn’t let him.

“I scheduled another date,” Kakashi says quietly. “Because I want you to take it. Iruka, you’re by far the most qualified, you’re a skilled teacher who has been at the Academy a long time. Not only do your classes have the highest graduation rate and the highest acceptance rate into jonin teams,” Iruka blinks, clearly he did not know this, “but of all the Chunin Exams held, your students are the ones who pass the first time”

“That’s more to the credit of their jonin-senseis,” Iruka shakes his head.

“Perhaps, but there is a correlation between your class and first time test takers who pass,” Kakashi allows him to digest his words before he speaks again, “so tell me the truth. Why do you really not want to take it?”

“I told you, Kakashi-san,” Iruka says stubbornly, “I need to focus on my class and the students in front of me first”

“You wouldn’t start as vice principal until your current class is done,” Kakashi points out. “You were personally recommended by the board. Not even Ebisu, an elite tutor, was recommended”

“Can we please drop it?” Iruka’s voice is tense and Kakashi knows that if he pushes further, he’ll snap Iruka’s patience and he’s rather peaceful right now.

“For now, sensei,” Kakashi lays back down, head in Iruka’s lap again. “Let’s talk about Naruto’s wedding instead”

At that, Iruka brightens up and the tense atmosphere settles until they’re wandering back to Iruka’s apartment together.

The wedding itself is magnificent. Held on the Hyuga Clan grounds.

Naruto and Hinata look unbelievably happy and radiant.

He watches as Iruka begins to tear up with happiness as he pins a flower on Naruto's suit and presses a kiss to his forehead.

Kakashi finds Iruka at the reception. The younger man is standing off to the side, watching the people milling about. He seems troubled by something and Kakashi wonders which thing it is.

"What's the matter, Iruka-sensei?" Kakashi approaches. "Is something still worrying you?"

"Well…" a faint flush crosses his cheeks and his shoulders stiffen almost imperceptibly.

"It's going to be alright," Kakashi reassures him, throwing out a completely arbitrary and probably unlikely worry to ease his apprehension, "thanks to you, Iruka-sensei, we have guard duty covered with enough shinobi"

"No, that was all you, Kakashi-san"

"No, I didn't do anything," Kakashi studies the scarred face, "I just helped a little. It's all thanks to the bonds Naruto forged. Naruto's here and that's why everyone is here today," Kakashi remembers their conversation from the night before, "I'm sure he will make Hinata happy. Are you still worried?"

"Well…" Iruka begins before his expression shifts, "I forgot to prepare my final message," he laughs and even though Kakashi knows that's not what's truly bothering him, he can't help but laugh with him because dammit Iruka looks adorable with that sheepish expression.

"Have you thought anymore about taking the vice principal exam?" more targeted and probably closer to what's on Iruka's mind.

"I told you, Kakashi-san, I don't plan to take it"

Kakashi sighs. Why does Iruka do this? Every time that there's an opportunity for Iruka to advance, he handicaps himself by turning it down.

Iruka has proved himself to be incredibly clever, skilled, and in possession of a particularly nasty streak that makes him a formidable opponent.

Yet he refused to even entertain the idea of promotion to jonin.

Sandaime once suggested he become a tokubetsu jonin and Iruka had still balked at the idea. Kakashi knows that he has some of the worst self-esteem Kakashi has ever encountered. The why is the one mystery Kakashi has yet to solve.

“Because of that student? The one who stole the scroll?”

“Not just,” Iruka says, watching Gai and Lee race across the perimeter on their hands. “It’s my own personal failing as a teacher”

Frustration curls in Kakashi’s chest. If Iruka is a failure as a teacher, then no one is a success.

“Iruka-sensei! Iruka-sensei!” a pair of kids are running towards them, keeping Kakashi from the argument he stayed up half the night crafting as to why Iruka should take it, “Tsukune is going to glitter bomb Naruto!”

A long-suffering expression crosses Iruka’s face.

“Excuse me, Kakashi-san,” Iruka bows, following the pair at a rather fast clip.

Kakashi watches in amusement as Iruka captures a boy with spiky brown hair and a dusty pink bandana by the wrist and puts whatever was in his hand in his pocket before launching into a lecture.

There is one thing that Kakashi knows and that’s that Iruka really is perfect as a teacher rather than an administrator.

But really, Iruka continually holds himself back and Kakashi has no idea if it’s a conscious thing on his part.

Kakashi watches from his spot as Iruka is now accosted by other former and current students of his, chattering away.

Shino Aburame stops him and their conversation lasts quite a while.

Kakashi watches Shikamaru and Temari make the rounds, hand in hand. Kotetsu and Izumo are sitting beneath a tree; Kotetsu’s head on Izumo’s shoulder. Sai has his arm wrapped around Ino’s waist and they’re staring up at the cherry blossoms.

He idly wonders what Iruka would do if he came up behind him and wrapped his arms around his waist or kissed him on the cheek.

They've been doing this same old song and dance for so many years now. They've been sleeping together regularly since shortly before the Chunin Exams and that was five years ago. Kakashi began a subtle crusade to date Iruka two years ago.

For someone so smart, Iruka can be so dense. Kakashi uses that to his advantage by dragging Iruka out for ramen or drinks, sometimes he'd make him try out new restaurants with him. A couple times, Kakashi even surprised him with flowers, claiming Tenzo sprouted and he thought Iruka would like them. And Iruka, sweet, clueless Iruka, believed they were just friends with benefits.

The truth of the matter is, Iruka is obviously not prepared for a defined relationship. He seems more than content to not question anything and allow Kakashi to do as he pleases.

Which is quite a lot, now that Kakashi thinks on it. Before becoming Hokage, Kakashi stayed over at Iruka's apartment more than he did his own. Now he just ends up spending more time in his office then anywhere else, but when he does manage to get some time free, he still usually ends up at Iruka's apartment.

Iruka even keyed him in to his unnecessarily complicated and rather aggressive, hair-trigger wards. Despite them being non-lethal, because apparently his students will occasionally try to break in, they still do some pretty nasty things: self-replicating glitter, dyeing someone entirely blue, dyeing their hair an odd color, covering them in some kind of nasty goo, making their footprints glow, Kakashi's favorite is the one that makes the perpetrator smell like some unholy combination of sulfur and roadkill and his second favorite is the one that makes people sing or speak in rhyme anytime they open their mouths. And he rotates them out periodically so that it's never a given that the wards will be the same one day to the next.

Iruka had let him try out the results of some of his traps a little too gleefully.

Kakashi swears he's still scrubbing blue from his nail beds and his respect for Iruka's sheer creativity rose a hundredfold.

He's also secure in the knowledge that he's one of very few who are aware of the fact Iruka is not just a kind, soft-hearted, polite chunin Academy teacher. He's sure Anko, Kotetsu and Izumo are aware, and apparently Ibiki has a checkered history with Iruka dating back to their pre-teen years. From Kakashi's observations, the gruff and

irritated but never aggressive manner that Ibiki treats Iruka with is tantamount to acknowledgment of something like familial bonds. The fact he never does anything more than creatively threaten Iruka, or throw him in one of the nicer T&I cells overnight, is testament to Ibiki's fondness.

Ibiki doesn't let just anyone steal food from his lunch. And not just anyone would be brave enough to do so.

Kakashi watches the object of his observation get accosted by Gai. Iruka is also one of the only people who can listen to Gai's impassioned speeches without immediately running off. Something Iruka himself attributes to years of listening to pre-genin talk at length about literally everything. Gai has developed a strong fondness for Iruka and regularly waxes poetic about his Youthful Passion for Molding The Youthful Minds of the Next Generation.

But nearly everyone is fond of Iruka in some way.

Which sometimes makes things difficult for Kakashi since Iruka has no shortage of admirers.

"What are you thinking about senpai?" Tenzo pops up next to him.

"Do you think Iruka would be mad if I went over to him and kissed him?"

"Probably," Tenzo follows his gaze. Tenzo is aware of their relationship because it makes it easier to shake his ANBU guards if his cute little kohai is on his side. Although he's pretty sure that it's more for Iruka's sake than Kakashi's. "You should just tell him you're dating him senpai"

"Maa, but where's the fun in that?" Kakashi tilts his head, "he should be able to see underneath the underneath"

Tenzo gives him a weary look.

Chapter End Notes

> I feel like Iruka was a totally wasted character □ his stats have him on par with most of the tokubetsu jonin and even some of the regular jonin yet he's remained chunin. Then that episode where he turns down the vice principal exam…it made me wonder if Iruka is the type of person to sabotage himself. Canonically, his self-esteem seems to be shit

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kakashi wakes up feeling like his nerves are on fire. His chakra pathways feel like they're filled with pins and needles and he groans.

"Kashi-?" Iruka stirs.

"It's alright," he kisses him, "go back to sleep"

"Mn"

Kakashi waits for Iruka's breathing to even out before shakily making his way to the bathroom.

This isn't the first time this has happened, nor the second or third.

He hadn't realized just how much of a chakra drain the Sharingan was until it was gone. Which meant he didn't realize how much chakra he had.

He quietly gets dressed and slips out of Iruka's apartment window, heading to the furthest training grounds.

His chakra pathways are burning now and he knows he needs to do something before they blow his meridians.

Before he lost the Sharingan, he was limited to three Raikiri. Now, he can get up to six, seven if he's willing to risk chakra exhaustion. It's the fastest way to burn off the excess chakra.

Somewhere between his fourth and fifth Raikiri, he feels a familiar presence at the edge of the training ground.

He doesn't even ask how Iruka found him. Iruka always finds him.

"Kashi?" he asks, voice still thick with residual sleepiness.

"Sorry," Kakashi instinctively apologizes.

"For what?" Iruka is still wearing those hideous orange ramen patterned pajama pants that were a gift from Naruto when he got his first ever mission paycheck.

“Waking you. Making you come out here. Probably worrying you”

“The last one, yes,” Iruka moves closer, “but you didn’t make me come out here. What’s wrong?”

Kakashi sighs. He can feel the chakra beginning to build painfully.

“I’ll tell you in a minute,” he pulls off another Raikiri, chakra sparking brightly. Iruka gasps in shock.

“Kakashi!” he hurries over, “your chakra…it’s a mess”

“Ah, yeah,” Kakashi scratches the back of his head, “I have too much of it now”

“Here, hold out your arms”

Kakashi watches quietly as Iruka closes his eyes and takes Kakashi’s forearms in his hands.

“Hm. I see,” Iruka murmurs. Kakashi freezes at the gentle, questing thread of Iruka’s chakra against his. “I see this problem with a lot of my younger students who have no chakra control. Usually I just run them through exercises, but your chakra…there’s definitely too much. Channeling it out isn’t more than a temporary fix you need to relearn how to circulate it”

As Iruka is talking, his chakra is slowly moving through Kakashi’s pathways.

“Alright, send your chakra to follow mine”

Kakashi closes his eyes and tries to obey but he pushes too much and winces.

“It’s okay,” Iruka soothes, “try again, go slow, like you’re learning how to control chakra the first time. Just start with a trickle…”

Kakashi closes his eyes and lets Iruka’s voice guide him through the exercise. He loosens his chakra bit by bit until it’s flowing more comfortably. He lets a bit more seep through and winces, pulling back.

“There,” Iruka says, “you found the right amount, now just keep circling it, get used to the feeling, become familiar with how much chakra it is”

Kakashi becomes only partially aware of Iruka’s warm thumbs

stroking the insides of his wrists as he circulates his chakra into a comfortable rhythm.

“There, better?”

“Much,” Kakashi sighs, suddenly feeling exhausted but it’s a normal exhaustion and not the exhaustion of pushing all the chakra out of his body.

“Back to bed?”

Kakashi nods and Iruka takes his hand. He lets Iruka guide him through the streets of Konoha, focusing on circulating his chakra.

“Starting tomorrow, we’re going to meditate, alright?” Iruka says as he settles against Kakashi’s chest, “we’ll get a handle on your chakra control”

“You don’t have to…” Kakashi says, “it’s…it’s not going to be easy”

“*Anata*, I’ve taught pre-genin with no experience how to control their chakra for years. Not only do you already know how to control your chakra, but you’re also a genius. You’re going to be easier than inexperienced pre-genin”

Iruka makes a valid point and Kakashi squeezes him tightly, grateful that he has someone to help walk him through it.

The next day, Iruka is dragging Kakashi to the training grounds to meditate before setting him off on tree walking.

Something that has been second nature to Kakashi for what feels like his entire life now takes him time to think about and the first two times he attempts it, he blows up the trees and the third time he falls off. His fourth time he’s figured out the right amount of chakra and successfully manages something most pre-genin can do by graduation.

Iruka, for his part, doesn’t laugh or look amused at Kakashi’s failures. There’s no teasing remarks or subtle ribbing like there would be normally, and Kakashi hadn’t realized how much he actually appreciates that, there’s also no pity or judgment at the soon to be Hokage not even being able to manage something simple like tree-walking. Iruka directs him through practice with nothing more than a few encouraging words and instruction on easing his chakra flow.

They practice for an hour before Kakashi has to leave and focus on

Hokage-in-training duties. But the early morning practice session did a lot to keep his chakra from feeling like a horde of fire ants crawling through his pathways.

His chakra isn't always in flux like that, but Iruka doesn't seem to care. He always makes sure that Kakashi spends at least thirty minutes meditating and circulating his chakra and he made Kakashi promise to continue doing it even when Iruka wasn't around.

When they have time, Iruka drags Kakashi into a training ground and makes him practice the very basic chakra moulding techniques with the same lack of reaction he had the first day.

He thinks that if Iruka hadn't found him that night he'd still be trying to bulldoze his way through figuring it out. He would eventually, but Iruka's way is much less painful. And he gets to spend time with Iruka.

No wonder pre-genin like him, Kakashi thinks, watching his own hands as he creates little balls of chakra around his fingertips and passes them to Iruka before they get passed back and he has to add a bit more.

He's watched Iruka teach a few times, but actually experiencing it is something else.

"Maa, sensei"

"Hm?" Iruka looks up from where he's skillfully feeding a bit of his own chakra into the balls before passing them back to Kakashi.

"I think if my Academy teacher had been more like you, I would have wanted to stay longer"

Iruka's blush is one of Kakashi's favorite things. "Oh," he scratches his scar as Kakashi funnels a bit more chakra. One of the balls explodes and he frowns. "It's alright," Iruka says, carefully accepting the three remaining little glowing balls. "The fact you can create and control four small ones instead of just one is impressive. I have some pre-genin who can't even make a single chakra ball"

"I would hope it's more impressive than a pre-genin," Kakashi teases lightly, "It would be a shame for the Hokage to be outdone by snot wielders"

Iruka flicks him lightly on the nose, ignoring his pained yelp.

“Udon aside,” Iruka says transferring the chakra balls back and Kakashi snorts as he remembers Iruka’s rants about Konohamaru’s crony and how his mother really should have taken him to a doctor, “pre-genin generally don’t come with that much snot”

“I’ve seen them eat their boogers,” Kakashi’s eyes widen as he nearly explodes another ball, but catches it in time.

“Good job,” Iruka praises genuinely and Kakashi knows he’s blushing beneath his mask. It’s stupid, really, but there haven’t been many instances in his life where people have said ‘good job’ for something that didn’t involve killing someone. “Only some of them,” Iruka continues the thread of their conversation, “though one year I did have one kid who ate snails”

Kakashi explodes all the balls in his surprise before looking up at Iruka wide-eyed.

“Snails?”

“Mhm, sorry I surprised you, do it again”

“Only if you tell me about snail kid,” Kakashi says, but obediently creates four small chakra balls again, passing them to Iruka. He likes listening to his voice; it’s pleasant and carefully modulated to hold the listener’s interest.

“Ah,” Iruka laughs, “well, it’s exactly what it sounds like. He’d was in the class I had after Konohamaru’s. He would eat snails. He kept them in a bag in his desk but the crunching of the shells was…” Iruka shudders, “unsettling to say the least”

“Alive?” Kakashi’s chakra balls wobble and he concentrates again.

“Alive,” Iruka confirms, “we had to check him whenever he came in from recess. When I asked him why, his response was that he liked the way they crunched”

“Um”

“So I started bringing in cups of ice for him to chew on instead which worked. At least in the classroom. I’m not sure about outside…” Iruka hums an odd little rhythm as he passes the chakra balls back. “His family seemed to find it amusing more than anything,” he shakes his head, “claimed it hardened his constitution. Don’t get me wrong, a little dirt never killed anyone, but this kid was eating maybe six snails

a day”

“That’s disgusting,” Kakashi shudders, funneling more chakra into the balls. “I don’t know how you deal with it. Three genin were more than enough for me”

Iruka shoots him an amused look. “He did outgrow it, eventually. He made chunin rather quickly as well. He now works at the Mission Desk. He does still have a penchant for chewing on crunchy things though”

Kakashi raises an eyebrow. “I feel like teaching at the Academy should be an S-Rank mission,” he says. They’ve had this conversation many times before, usually when Iruka comes home frustrated or injured from weapons practice.

The balls are now roughly the size of tangerines and Kakashi is struggling to keep them from touching.

“Now merge them all together, carefully,” Iruka says, setting up a barrier around Kakashi’s hand.

It takes an inordinate amount of concentration and Kakashi can actually feel sweat beading his brows as he carefully weaves the four individual balls into a stable larger ball that flickers happily in his palm.

The barrier drops and Iruka is smiling at him with a genuine pride that causes him to blush under his mask again.

“That was great!” Iruka says and again, Kakashi imagines that being a pre-genin in Iruka’s class must be nice. The realization that he’s jealous of a bunch of children causes the chakra ball to wobble and he drops it into Iruka’s barrier as it explodes. “You’ll be back to your old skill level in no time”

Kakashi studies Iruka’s earnest face and resists the urge to kiss him. At this hour, the training grounds this far out are generally unused, but there’s no guarantee they won’t encounter anyone.

“That’s probably enough for today,” Iruka hums. “I have to get to the Academy and you have to get to the Tower”

Kakashi wishes he could spend more time with Iruka, but they had both promised each other in the beginning that duty came first. Kakashi would more than happily shirk his paperwork, but doing so

would disappoint Iruka so he dutifully bid him farewell with a masked kiss to his cheek before taking to the rooftops.

Maybe if he got done in time, he could pester Iruka that evening.

Shizune had nearly had a heart attack the first time Kakashi had finished all his paperwork without complaint just so he could go see Iruka and not feel guilty about lying to the man.

Iruka really had changed him for the better.

A month after they started their daily practicing, Tsunade examines him and declares his chakra to be the most stable she's seen it since losing the Sharingan.

The curious look she gives him has him deflecting her answer before listening to Shizune explain the protocol of Wind Country's daimyo which he already knows.

Kakashi knows that the main reason Tsunade is staying this long is because they can't have a Hokage who can't control his chakra. As much as he doesn't want to be Hokage, he knows it's inevitable so he doubles down on his training.

Even when Iruka's not around Kakashi circulates his chakra, getting used to the feeling.

At some point Iruka actually hands him a lesson plan and Kakashi stares with some amusement at Iruka breaking down his training for him. Although he becomes grateful when he realizes that the fifteen to thirty minute increments means Kakashi can work them in between meetings.

If he starts reading paperwork while standing upside down on the roof of the office, it's only because Shizune's reaction every time she comes in is entertaining.

He's also taken to generating one or two small chakra balls on his fingertips and transferring them from hand to hand.

Several months after Iruka gave him the lesson plan, Kakashi's more confident in his ability to control his chakra.

In a rare moment he can get away, he sits on Iruka's couch, meditating. It's getting easier to circle his chakra at a comfortable level.

Iruka is curled up underneath his kotatsu grading papers. Apparently it had been a long day because the shadows under Iruka's eyes are prominent and the tense set of his shoulders bothers Kakashi. He counts three yawns in the span of an hour and he knows Iruka needs a break and Kakashi knows just how to do it.

Kakashi slides behind him and tugs loose his ponytail, running his fingers through Iruka's hair.

"*Anata*, what are you doing?" Iruka asks, not looking up from his grading.

"Playing with your hair"

Iruka laughs softly. "Alright. Have fun"

Kakashi separates out the thick, soft strands and begins to twist them, braiding them and unbraiding them and twirling them around his fingers.

Iruka lets his head fall back into Kakashi's hands.

"You're distracting me from grading, you know"

"I could distract you in a lot more fun way," Kakashi says, trailing his fingers down the back of Iruka's neck before slipping around to curl around his throat and angle his head back. Kakashi presses soft kisses down his neck and Iruka's eyes flutter shut. "We haven't had time to do this lately," he slides his hand up Iruka's shirt stroking down his back, lightly raking his nails over the sensitive shuriken scar. Iruka's hands curl in the fabric of his pants and he lets out a quiet sound.

"Kakashi…"

"Yes?" he drags his fingers back up, thumb pressing and rubbing against the edge of the scar. Iruka bows his back to escape Kakashi's hand with a quiet whimper. Kakashi slides Iruka's shirt over his head and continues his slow exploration of the warm skin until Iruka is writhing against him and gasping quietly.

"Your chakra"

Kakashi's hand gently cards through the soft brown hair leading from his belly button and slowly dips into Iruka's pants. They've held off, in part because of their duties, but also because Kakashi's chakra flares when he's in a heightened state of arousal nearly shattered Iruka's

special chakra concealing wards twice. And the people of Konoha within range absolutely do not need to know that Iruka's tongue is pretty capable of some amazing things.

"Maa, think of it like the final test after the months of training," he kisses his neck.

Iruka exhales a groan as Kakashi's hand wraps around him.

"*Anata*…" he whines, "then if you're gonna distract me, distract me properly"

"As you wish," Kakashi chuckles, nipping at the soft skin of his neck and collarbone until Iruka is shifting in his lap to straddle him and kissing him within an inch of his life.

"Off," Iruka tugs at Kakashi's pants.

"Only if you do," Kakashi grins. He wonders about the feasibility of finding and/or developing a clothes removal jutsu. He mentions it to Iruka who gives him a long look.

"I'll let you think about why that sounds like and absolutely terrible idea later," Iruka kicks off his pants and underwear and suddenly there's no clothes between them and Kakashi is groaning at the warm press of skin against skin.

Iruka shudders, pitching forward, head coming to rest on Kakashi's shoulder as his hands grip his biceps, thumb brushing over the red mark on his arm. The ANBU tattoo has faded with age, and without the chakra keeping it active. But he remembers one time after a rough mission that had left him seeing blood everywhere Iruka had gently and almost reverently traced the tattoo, kissing it before reassuring Kakashi that he did what he did so that people at home could be safe before telling him a cute story about some of his students. It had reminded Kakashi what he was fighting to protect and he had held Iruka tighter, afraid that Iruka was a figment of his imagination and would fade if he let go.

The memory surges through Kakashi now and overwhelms him with feelings so he kisses Iruka; slow and soft and gentle.

He wraps his hand around both of them and slowly, steadily strokes. Iruka's eyes are closed and Kakashi watches, eyes half-lidded, the play of expressions on his expressive face.

Iruka's hand joins his, fingers lacing together as his other arm wraps around Kakashi's neck. It's a slow, easy pace. Creative use with a water jutsu keeps the friction from being uncomfortable and Kakashi kisses him, trailing his other hand down Iruka's spine to ghost over his scar. Iruka loses his rhythm and retaliates by grazing his fingers lightly down Kakashi's side.

Kakashi can always tell when Iruka is close to release because his hips always do a cute little stutter. With a twist of his wrist and a flick of his thumb across the heads, Iruka is coming followed shortly by Kakashi himself. It's not a fast and frantic coupling and the pleasure crests over Kakashi slowly, like a wave rather than a tsunami, leaving his nerves buzzing softly in the afterglow.

After several moments, Kakashi recovers enough to use his own shirt to wipe the mess off their hands. Iruka's head falls to his shoulder and he lifts up his leg so Iruka can lean against it. Iruka's arms drape lazily around his waist and Kakashi holds him close, tucked between his legs and resting against his chest.

"So," Kakashi murmurs, "did I pass, sensei?"

"Hm," Iruka hums, eyes closed, "we may need to test you again, just to be sure"

Iruka is warm and sleepy against him and Kakashi splays his hand against Iruka's shoulder, marveling slightly at the contrast between their skin tones. Iruka lazily presses gentle, open-mouthed kisses against Kakashi's skin.

Kakashi tilts his head back and kisses him, soft and slow and sweet, hand loosely woven through the ends of his hair.

He never wants this to end, he wants to stay like this with Iruka forever.

"*Anata*," Iruka murmurs against his skin.

"Hm?"

"Like this," Iruka murmurs, clearly half-asleep, "just staying like this"

Kakashi smiles against Iruka's lips at the echo of his own thoughts.

"Staying like this," Kakashi agrees. "What about going to a bed?"

“Mmkay,” Iruka allows Kakashi to pull him to his feet and tug him down the hall to the bedroom.

They collapse in the bed together; Kakashi on his back and Iruka sprawled out on top of him, face nestled against his neck. Kakashi can feel the slow and steady beating of his heart and circulation of his chakra and he smiles.

He matches his own chakra flow to Iruka’s sleeping one and his eyes begin to slide closed.

It’s the first time in a long time his chakra doesn’t wake him up in the middle of the night and he decides he’s found a better way to handle it.

When Tsunade finally steps down officially, she tells Kakashi that he had better not lose whoever it is that is helping him or she would come back and kill him.

Chapter End Notes

> snail boy is based off of a kid I knew in elementary school irl. he’d collect them in the playground at recess and keep them in a ziploc baggie in his desk. the crunch really is just as horrific as it sounds. he’s a lawyer now. take that for what you will.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Some days, Kakashi really hates being Hokage.

Really, really hates it.

He's staring at the pile of paperwork towering over him. He had gotten it down to just three long-term pieces the previous night and somehow it magically tripled in size.

He wonders if someone is pranking him with a self-replicating paperwork seal (again) before remembering Iruka is busy taking the vice principal exam all day.

Kakashi had finally convinced Iruka to at least take the exam by telling him there's no guarantee he would pass anyway and it would be a good way for Iruka to find where his weaknesses are. Although Kakashi knows Iruka will pass with flying colors and his skills are well-rounded enough that maybe his only weakness is genjutsu, and even then Kakashi wouldn't consider it a significant weakness.

He knows Iruka trains with Anko and sometimes Kurenai. He also knows that Iruka's fighting style is dirty and more fitting for a street brawler than an Academy teacher. The first time Kakashi had seen him actually fight, he had taken a kunai to the arm in his distraction because Iruka discards the textbook perfect techniques Kakashi knows he teaches his students and becomes unpredictable; biting, groin shots, dirt throwing and one memorable time he had even yanked the kunoichi's long ponytail, smashing her face into a rock before slitting her throat.

It had been the hottest thing Kakashi had ever seen and he is still ashamed to admit he slipped off his branch and ran into the trunk of the tree.

That was when he decided that he needed to catch Iruka's attention.

Now he has it. Mostly. It had been a long process of subtly needling him and outright provoking him and just happening to show up in his general vicinity, usually when Iruka needed advice or a friendly ear. It had worked to an extent.

He decides to stop thinking about Iruka fighting, or Iruka in general, before he ruins yet another mask with a nosebleed. The Academy teacher soon to be vice principal is the reason Kakashi has started carrying around a backup mask.

The result of the exam will be given the same day considering Iruka is the only one who made it to the practical. It's basically a guarantee that he'll get the position, it's now just a matter of assessing his skills. So Kakashi slides the paperwork across his desk with the full intention of finishing it in time to congratulate Iruka for passing.

Unfortunately, the stack of paperwork only seems to grow as soon as he makes a bit of a dent. It's frustrating and with a glance at the clock, Kakashi decides to come back to it later. Instead, he summons Tenzo and tells him he's ditching his ANBU guard to go to Ichiraku's with Iruka.

Even behind his cat mask, Kakashi can feel Tenzo's exasperation and it absolutely delights him.

Once he's shaken off his regular ANBU guard with a cleverly placed clone, Kakashi hops out the window and makes his way to the newly reconstructed testing facility in time to see Iruka emerge.

The teacher looks a little battered; chunks of his hair are falling from the ponytail, his pants and shirt are torn and Kakashi can smell the faint scent of smoke from the singed edges of his vest.

Iruka drops to the stone stairs and lowers his head between his legs to catch his breath.

Three jonin appear. Kakashi recognizes one as the current Academy head. The other two he thinks are on the board.

Iruka stands and bows, despite looking like he's seconds from falling over.

"Congratulations!" the principal says, "Umino Iruka, you have successfully passed the Vice Principal Exam"

Iruka stares at the man in clear shock.

"There will be an official announcement when you accept the position"

"I-uh, wait, how many people took this exam?" Iruka blinks.

“Just you”

Iruka stumbles back and lands hard on the concrete steps. Kakashi winces.

“Oh”

“Congratulations, Umino-sensei,” the principal pats his shoulder. “You’ve earned it”

Iruka seems to be too dazed to respond aside from a faint head nod. The Academy proctors take their leave.

Kakashi is about to approach Iruka when another figure rounds the corner. Kakashi raises his eyebrows at the hulking, familiar form.

“Here,” Ibiki gruffly shoves a box into Iruka’s hands. “Congrats”

Iruka opens the lid before grinning brightly at the interrogation specialist who just glares at him harder.

“My favorite,” Iruka laughs, “thank you, Ibiki-san”

Ibiki grunts and rubs his head. “Maybe more responsibilities will keep you away from T&I”

“I haven’t done anything to T&I. Not lately”

“Let’s keep it that way”

Mischief flickers across Iruka’s face and he launches at Ibiki, squeezing him into a hug before pulling away before Ibiki can so much as blink.

“You little shit,” Ibiki groans. “Fix your hair. You look a mess”

Kakashi watches as Iruka makes Ibiki hold the box and his forehead protector as he sweeps his hair into a smooth ponytail again. He isn’t entirely sure what the nature of their relationship is except that it’s not romantic or sexual. He knows Ibiki isn’t interested in either type of relationship with anyone so he doesn’t worry. But the sadistic, scarred interrogation specialist and the pacifistic, kind-hearted schoolteacher still make an odd pair. He knows Iruka spent a good portion of his early teenage years making Ibiki’s life hell and he suspects Ibiki is begrudgingly impressed by Iruka’s skills. It’s not something Iruka ever really talks about. He seems to prefer avoiding conversations about his childhood.

He would wonder how Ibiki knew about Iruka taking the exam, but he's not surprised.

He knows Anko would probably be there too if she wasn't on a mission. And Iruka's adorable gate guard friends were on guard duty.

He waits until Ibiki leaves before approaching silently.

"You know you didn't have to hide," Iruka says, amused.

"Maa, it looked like you were having fun," Kakashi teases. "I still don't get it"

Iruka laughs. "Ibiki-san isn't so bad"

Kakashi doesn't respond to that because they've had this conversation many times over. Instead he tugs down his mask and tilts Iruka's chin up, sweeping still loose strands behind his ear.

"Aren't you afraid someone will see?" Iruka murmurs, gaze landing on his lips.

"Are you?" Kakashi quirks an eyebrow.

"Then I suppose you'd better hurry up and kiss me"

Kakashi does just that. Iruka's lips are soft and warm and a little dry. He cradles Iruka's head in his hands and Iruka gently grips his sleeves. These are Kakashi's favorite types of kisses, not an insistent kiss that seeks anything more than simply being a kiss. Sometimes they turn into more, but usually they're just a simple kiss.

"Congratulations, Vice Principal Umino," Kakashi smiles.

"I don't know about this…" Iruka suddenly looks doubtful, "passing the test doesn't mean I've accepted the position," Kakashi sighs.

"Do you trust me?"

"You know I do"

"Then trust me on this," Kakashi cradles Iruka's chin, pressing his lips against the edge of Iruka's scar. "Take the position"

"What if I fail?" Iruka whispers, so quiet that Kakashi almost doesn't hear, maybe wouldn't have if his hearing wasn't so good.

“If I thought that you would, I wouldn’t be telling you to do this”

Iruka is silent, hands curled against Kakashi’s sleeves, staring at a point over his shoulder as he contemplates. Kakashi lets him, knowing Iruka needs time to process things. He takes the time to study Iruka’s face contentedly.

“Alright,” Iruka looks up at him, “I’ll do it”

Kakashi kisses him again before pulling up his mask.

“Let me take you for ramen before your adorable friends get off their gate shift to steal you away”

“They-adorable?” Iruka laughs.

“They are,” Kakashi confirms with a grin, looping his pinky finger with Iruka’s.

“Why are they adorable?”

“One of them eats pure syrup and the other is his exhausted babysitter but they’re equally ridiculous together plus they’re childhood sweethearts who do everything together. They complement each other and they’re so very entertaining”

“Who would ever guess the feared Hatake Kakashi is such a romantic,” Iruka teases lightly.

“Nobody would believe you even if you told them,” Kakashi says gleefully. Iruka snorts softly before quickly kissing Kakashi on the cheek.

“Fine by me,” Iruka winks and Kakashi is grateful he has his mask up because every damn time Iruka initiates any form of affection he blushes. Nobody would ever take him seriously again.

The walk to Ichiraku’s is short.

“Ah, Iruka-sensei! Kakashi-san!” Teuchi grins at them, shooting Kakashi a look. Kakashi waves.

“Iruka-sensei just passed the Vice Principal Exam,” he says.

“Congratulations!” Teuchi shoots a thumbs up while Ayame squeals. “Ramen on the house!”

“Teuchi-san-” Iruka blushes.

“I insist!” Teuchi waves his hand.

Iruka glares at Kakashi who simply winks.

“We knew you could do it, Iruka-sensei!” Ayame grins, “now we have to call you Vice Principal Umino”

Iruka looks horrified at the thought and Kakashi sympathizes with him. He can also tell the confidence from earlier is slipping through his fingers.

“I haven’t-” he begins. Kakashi shoots him a look and he sighs.

“Don’t tell me you’re not taking the position!” Teuchi gestures.

“He is,” Kakashi says cheerfully.

“Anata!”

“Iruka, you can’t keep running from yourself,” Kakashi says.

“Listen to him,” Teuchi says, setting the ramen down in front of them.

“It’s such a big undertaking,” Iruka frets, “it’s a lot of pressure”

“You can handle it,” Kakashi says, ramen gone. Iruka eyes his empty bowl with an air of exasperation.

“You can’t keep eating like that,” Iruka points with his chopsticks, “at our age, you’ll give yourself indigestion”

Teuchi and Ayame exchange amused glances.

“No changing the topic,” Kakashi fires back. Iruka sighs.

“I…they haven’t even said the position is mine”

“You were the only one who took the exam,” Kakashi points out, “and they said an official announcement would be made when you accept the position. When. Not if”

Iruka stares at his ramen.

“It’s a lot of responsibility,” Iruka says, “and I won’t be able to teach kids one on one anymore”

“Don’t you also lead the auxiliary classes for genin who failed?” Kakashi asks.

“It’s not the same”

“Iruka, you can’t stay a teacher forever. As much as you love it, you can do a lot of good in a position of more power”

Iruka scratches at his scar. “I suppose”

“Like I said,” Kakashi rests his chin in his hand, “if I didn’t think you were capable I would not have pushed so hard for you to take the exam”

“Wise words from the Hokage,” Teuchi chuckles. “Iruka-sensei, you’re a good teacher. The kids like you. But like Kakashi-san said, as Vice Principal you can do so much more. Just think, one day soon you could be the Principal”

Iruka lets out a not exactly happy sound and Kakashi sighs.

“Let’s not scare him like that,” he keeps his voice light. Iruka glares at him. Good. Teuchi shakes his head and Ayame’s smile is indulgent.

“We just heard!” Kakashi scoots back as Iruka is suddenly accosted by his two friends. Kakashi knows they’re Kotetsu and Izumo, but he can’t always remember which one is which. The one who eats syrup has his arms wrapped so tightly around Iruka’s neck it looks like he’s trying to choke him out rather than hug him.

They haven’t noticed Kakashi yet, who further minimizes his presence to watch the spectacle unnoticed.

“Ko! You’re gonna make him pass out again!” the calmer one says, tugging his partner’s arms. Ah, Kotetsu is the syrup connoisseur then.

Again!? Kakashi eyes them warily now.

“Ah, shit, sorry Ru!” Kotetsu spins the teacher around and pats his cheeks, “you look like hell”

“It wasn’t the easiest test in the world,” Iruka scratches at his scar. “I didn’t think I would pass, honestly”

Kakashi rolls his eyes.

“We’ve been telling you for weeks!” Izumo grins, “if anyone was

gonna pass, it would be you”

Kakashi decides he greatly approves of Iruka’s friends.

Iruka blushes and turns back to his bowl of ramen.

“When Anko gets back, we’re gonna get smashed!” Kotetsu whoops. “It’s tradition after all!”

“Aren’t we a little too old to do that anymore?” Iruka laughs nervously.

“When Zu and I make jonin, we’re all gonna drink our way through the village until we’re too hungover to function the next day,” Kotetsu grins, “so why wouldn’t we do it for you?”

“Guys, it’s not that big of a deal, really,” Iruka holds his hands up.

“Are you kidding?” Kotetsu gripes, “besides, when have we ever needed a good reason? We did it after you successfully sinkholed the ANBU staircase after that one pissed you off”

Kakashi widens his eyes. He had heard about that incident. He hadn’t known Iruka was the one responsible for it. But he really shouldn’t be surprised.

“Yes, well,” Iruka casts a glance at Kakashi, who makes a go on gesture. He’s enjoying this conversation far too much. “Lion and Boar were doing a piss poor job of keeping Naruto safe. It was only keyed to their chakra anyways”

Kakashi suspects there’s something more to the story and he decides he’s definitely going to ask Iruka later. He had never liked Boar much anyway.

Unfortunately Iruka’s glance doesn’t go unnoticed by his friends.

“Hokage-sama!” “Rokudaime-sama!” they blurt out simultaneously. “We’re sorry we didn’t see you!”

“Drop the sama, please,” Kakashi sighs. Iruka sends him a look that is both sympathetic and pained. Now *Vice Principal Umino* knows what it feels like. “Sounds like a fun time you have planned”

“It’s something like tradition,” Iruka explains, looking embarrassed.

“Yeah!” Kotetsu grins, “anytime one of us does something big we go

out and get super trashed. Except Ru, it's not fair. He can drink Anko under the table. He once drank Tsunade under the table"

Izumo elbows him and Iruka buries his face in his hands. Kakashi is delighted at this facet of the teacher because really Iruka is one giant surprise.

"Is that so?"

"Oh yeah," Kotetsu continues, seemingly perfectly happy to ignore Iruka's palpable embarrassment and Kakashi's obvious egging, "once Tsunade-sama realized Iruka could outdrink her he became her drinking buddy"

"Only a couple times…" Iruka mumbles into his hands. Kakashi is amused to discover even his hands are blushing. "It's an old trick my dad taught me…he called it the Umino family bloodline limit. His specialty was information gathering, specifically in bars. It can also be used to circulate poison out of the body"

Kakashi is very impressed.

"Yeah except you won't teach us," Izumo complains.

"I don't know how to teach it"

"You're a teacher!" Izumo says and Kakashi gets the feeling they've had this argument many times.

"Yeah, but it's not something easy to teach," Iruka tries to explain, "it's just a very slow circulation of chakra…but the way it's done is different and the only way I know how is because-" Iruka cuts himself off.

"Your echolocation no jutsu isn't as secret as you think anymore," Izumo sighs.

"Echolocation?" Kakashi quirks an eyebrow.

Iruka sighs. "I can…hear chakra, I suppose. Or, well, the way chakra bounces off it's surrounding objects. It's useless outside a chakra dense area though. It's useful for catching troublemakers and finding students who sneak out. My mother used to be able to use it on missions, so either I inherited a watered down version or I just haven't trained it enough"

“It’s kinda cool,” Kotetsu chimes in, “Ru can find pretty much anyone”

“Before we knew about it, he was always winning at hide and seek,” Izumo frowns, “little did we know he was cheating”

“It’s not cheating!” Iruka defends. “Besides, I remember one time you used a clone! And it only works within maybe one or two kilometer radius, I haven’t really tested it’s range”

Kakashi absorbs all this new information about Iruka. He wonders why the teacher has never mentioned any of it to him before.

Iruka seems to be able to read his thoughts because he sends him an apologetic glance.

Kotetsu is chattering about the bars they plan on hitting up the next night and Kakashi tunes out, rolling these new facts about Iruka over in his head. He wonders what else there is about Iruka he doesn’t know about.

He’s told Iruka almost everything about him. Things hardly anyone else knows, much less all of it.

After coming back to life and having seen his father, Iruka held him as he talked about every memory he had of the man, his feelings about their relationship, how ashamed he was for the longest time. The teacher had thoroughly kissed him and reassured him that it was okay and that Kakashi has always been and will always be his own person.

After Obito was revealed to be alive and then died again, Iruka had found him destroying a training field trying to exhaust himself so he wouldn’t think about anything. Instead, Iruka had coaxed him back to his apartment and made him shower, made him tea and stole Anko’s television to watch the Icha Icha movie. Eventually Kakashi had told him everything about Rin, Obito and Minato-sensei, he had embarrassed himself by breaking down and silently crying against Iruka’s shoulder while the teacher gently stroked his hair for hours. He doesn’t think he had ever cried that much before in his life, except maybe after Rin’s death, but much less in front of another person. But between the forgiveness of Obito and the unburdening of his stories to nonjudgmental ears, it was the most adjusted and content Kakashi has ever felt.

Iruka is the only person on the planet who knows everything. Gai and Tenzo know bits and pieces of things but nothing to the extent Iruka does.

For the first time the reality of how much Iruka knows about him and how much Iruka could easily use that information to hurt him hits him and he's afraid.

"Maa, I've got some paperwork to finish," Kakashi slides off the stool, hoping that nobody catches the sudden tension in his voice. "Have a good night," Kakashi throws a casual wave over his shoulder as he lopes out.

He's halfway back to the Tower when the initial panic fades and his rational brain kicks in and he feels like an idiot for rushing out like that. He wonders if he can turn back around or if he should find Iruka later and apologize.

"Kakashi-san!" he hears Iruka's voice. He stops.

Apparently Iruka found him.

He really shouldn't be surprised.

"Iruka-sensei," he says, turning to wave lazily.

"Sorry about those two," he scratches at his scar, "they can be…a lot"

"Maa, no worries. I just have a lot of paperwork I remembered I had to do," Kakashi feigns indifference in the hopes that Iruka won't realize he had overreacted to a made up threat. "Spending time with your friends is…enlightening," Kakashi says.

Iruka sighs. "They talk too much"

"These abilities of yours, I didn't know about them"

"They're not really important," Iruka shrugs, "one is just very specific fine chakra control and the other is generally useless"

"Iruka," Kakashi again feels frustrated by how much Iruka diminishes his skills. Like he's actively looking for reasons to consider himself less than, "being able to filter poison out of your system is something only medic nins know how to do. That's impressive that you've honed it to this level. You could make tokubetsu jonin with that alone, not even mentioning your echolocation ability"

"Years of drinking with Anko, Kotetsu and Izumo, and eventually Tsunade," Iruka scratches at his scar. "And like I said, my echolocation ability isn't anything special"

“It could be,” Kakashi says, maybe a little shorter than normal because he really hates that Iruka does this, “you just haven’t trained it. Why not?”

Iruka shrugs. “My mother died before she could explain exactly how it works, so it’s been a lot of trial and error and a lot of migraines. Maybe if she had been able to teach me it would be stronger. By the time I figured it out enough to be of any use training it further, I had already decided to remain a chunin so I could continue teaching”

Kakashi studies him for a long moment before sighing. The pressure in his chest eases a bit now that the initial panic has settled. It’s not like Iruka is intentionally keeping things secret. And he knows that Iruka wouldn’t actually use anything he knows to hurt him.

“*Anata*,” Iruka says, catching his hand and tugging him into a hidden alleyway, “what’s bothering you?”

Kakashi studies the gentle features, bringing his hand up to trace the scar.

“I just,” Kakashi hesitates before remembering this is Iruka. Iruka who has seen him cry, heard his deepest insecurities and greatest shames and hasn’t judged him. “I got scared”

“Scared of what?” Iruka’s voice is gentle and Kakashi thinks he needs to ask him if he has some kind of truth extraction ability because it’s only too easy to trust him and to want to tell him things. Kakashi isn’t even bothered by the fact he suspects the tone in his voice is usually used on pre-genin.

He also remembers what Iruka had said about his father’s skill in information gathering. With the right training, Iruka would also be perfect for intelligence gathering and infiltration missions.

He sighs.

“That you know so much about me, you know everything about me. Yet I was learning things I didn’t know about you”

Iruka’s smile is soft and reassuring and he wraps his arms around Kakashi’s neck, pulling him down into a tight hug. Kakashi closes his eyes and buries his face against Iruka’s neck.

“*Anata*, I don’t know everything about you,” he says, “I’m sure if I spent any time with Gai-sensei or Captain Yamato, I would learn new

things about you too. And anything you want to know about me, you simply need to ask. I just didn't think any of these things were important"

Kakashi exhales, feeling the remaining pressure loosen from his chest. It's one thing to figure it out, but another to be verbally reassured.

"I know that," Kakashi says, "but in that moment I, I panicked"

"It's alright," Iruka murmurs, "to be honest, I'm scared too"

"Really?"

"Really," Iruka confirms, "this…thing between us, it's new to me. And everyday I'm scared I'll wake up and it'll have been entirely a dream"

"Well, if it is a dream, I'd wake up too," Kakashi says, "and then we'd both be awake and could make it a reality"

Iruka laughs and tightens his grip around Kakashi. "I see why they call you a genius, anata," his voice has a teasing lilt and Kakashi is overcome with the need to kiss him.

Iruka's back thumps lightly against the wood fence as Kakashi brackets him in with his arms as their lips meet. Iruka grips the front of his vest and pushes up to meet Kakashi's searing kiss. Kakashi cups his chin in his entire hand, angling his head, wrapping his other arm around Iruka's waist and pressing him harder against the fence.

The taste of ramen lingers on Iruka's tongue as Kakashi sweeps his own through Iruka's mouth.

He pulls away for a breath and opens his eyes slightly, wishing he had the Sharingan still so he could record the way Iruka looks right now; cheeks flushed red, eyes shut, mouth open as he tries to catch his breath. He kisses him again before that happens. Iruka whimpers low in the back of his throat as his grip on Kakashi's vest tightens. He licks lightly at Iruka's parted lips before sealing their mouths together and licking at the roof of Iruka's.

The whine changes into a low moan and Kakashi wants nothing more than to take him to bed but the thought of the paperwork that awaits him causes him to pull away.

Iruka makes a questioning sound and Kakashi sighs, dropping his forehead against Iruka's.

“Paperwork,” he says with a wince, “I wasn’t lying when I said there’s so much of it and I left half of it so that I could be there when you passed”

Iruka’s expression softens and his warm fingertips settle lightly on Kakashi’s chin, index finger tapping out an odd little rhythm on his mole.

“Go finish your paperwork,” Iruka kisses the mole and tugs Kakashi’s mask back up. “You can come over when you’re done, I don’t have to be up early tomorrow”

Kakashi brushes his nose against the side of Iruka’s before squeezing his hand.

“Then I’ll see you later,” Kakashi says, “I think you just gave me the best motivation to finish it all in a timely manner”

“Good,” Iruka’s smile is sly as he rolls his hips against Kakashi’s, pressing a kiss to the side of his mask before ducking out of the alleyway. “I’ll be waiting”

Kakashi doesn’t think he’s ever made it to his office so fast.

Suddenly the mound of paperwork is significantly less daunting.

Chapter End Notes

my teeth ache from writing this 💀 enjoy your cavities

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kakashi slides in through the open window, lands silently behind Iruka and brushes his nose against his cheek.

It's evening and Kakashi's paperwork load was surprisingly light today so before it can pile up again he bailed to go see Iruka. It's been far too long since they had any time alone together that wasn't just sleeping.

"Rokudaime-sama," Iruka teases. Kakashi shudders at the extreme formality.

"Please, no," he catches Iruka's wrist and presses a kiss to his palm.

"Hokage-sama"

"Stop it," Kakashi backs him against the wall.

"Kakashi-sama"

"You know what?" Kakashi pulls down his mask and kisses Iruka to shut him up. Iruka laughs as he wraps his arms around Kakashi's neck. "Why," kiss, "are," kiss, "you," kiss, "like this?"

"Hm," Iruka says between kisses, "is it so wrong to address one's Hokage by their title?"

"You do it to annoy me," Kakashi responds, nipping lightly at his jaw. Iruka's eyes flutter shut and he whines. "Or is it because you know the consequences?"

"Oh?" Iruka arches his eyebrow and Kakashi knows he's in trouble. "And what exactly are the consequences, *Rokudaime-sama*?" Kakashi groans. Only Iruka would manage to make the title something filthy.

"I cannot be held responsible for whatever happens should you address me like that in public," Kakashi slides his hands down the backs of Iruka's pants, squeezing the soft skin of his buttcheeks. Kakashi is very fond of Iruka's butt.

Iruka lets his head fall back against the wall with a dull thud.

“The odds of me having to do that aren’t high,” the last word trails off into a whine as Kakashi lets his fingertip dip between firm buttocks and draw a lazy circle against puckered skin. “Kakashi!”

“That’s me,” Kakashi grins. Iruka thumps him on the shoulder only to whine as Kakashi presses harder, fingertip sinking in just slightly.

Iruka flashes through several hand signs and Kakashi can feel the buzz of the chakra concealing wards that Iruka specifically designed to keep people from realizing where he was. And to keep his chakra contained. Originally, it had been designed for Naruto, who would lose control of his excessive amounts of chakra and scare the neighbors, especially during nightmares. But it carried over and after Kakashi lost the chakra drain that was the Sharingan, his own chakra had begun to become increasingly unstable and he became aware of just how much chakra he really had, Iruka had reconfigured them so that they could withstand Kakashi’s chakra.

It had been Iruka who regularly walked him through chakra exercises that he used on pre-genin. Exercises that had helped Kakashi regain control in the early days when he was relearning even the simple things like walking up trees.

It’s still a learning process, but Kakashi has his very own personal teacher.

Kakashi uncloaks his chakra, relieved he doesn’t have to worry about anyone finding him here, and allows himself to focus solely on Iruka.

The teacher is so very easy and Kakashi teasingly circles his finger before again sinking in just slightly, delighting in the full body shudder he receives.

“Stop teasing!” Iruka hisses, biting the wrist of the hand pressed against the wall by Iruka’s head.

“Ow,” Kakashi says mildly, shifting his hand to grip Iruka’s chin and slipping his thumb between plump lips, pressing down on his tongue. “That was mean, sensei. You’re spending too much time with pre-genin”

Iruka lets out an annoyed sound and Kakashi retaliates by pressing down on his tongue and up with his finger. The muffled moan as Iruka’s eyes fall shut is entirely worth it.

He thinks his favorite thing is to watch the younger man fall apart at his hands. And sex with Iruka is never dull or routine. He's as unpredictable as he is mercurial. Some days, Iruka is a brat who just doesn't want to give in and Kakashi has to break him down slowly and tease him until he's begging. Others, he's pushy and demanding, shoving Kakashi down and riding him until his legs begin to cramp and whispering things that someone who teaches young children really shouldn't be saying but have Kakashi's head spinning. Then there's the rare occasion he does something completely surprising.

Kakashi's last birthday before he became Rokudaime, he had shown up to Iruka's apartment after a mission only to find the younger man splayed on his bed with sparkling nipple clamps and a solid silver buttplug with a quote from Icha Icha written across his stomach.

Kakashi had nearly died of blood loss on the bedroom floor despite his wounds from the mission being only superficial.

He once tried to convince Iruka to wear nothing but his Hokage robes but Iruka had refused with a slightly haunted look, citing the fact that his strongest memories of them were of the Sandaime and he absolutely did not want to think about the Old Man with Kakashi buried balls deep in his ass. When put that way, Kakashi had quickly agreed.

Kakashi continues lazily circling his fingertip, occasionally sinking in a little deeper each time. Each time he does, Iruka moans around the thumb keeping his mouth from closing.

Eventually he pulls his thumb back to rest on Iruka's chin before leaning in and kissing him.

There's a knock at the door.

"Ignore it," Kakashi demands, blowing lightly in Iruka's ear.

"I can't," Iruka sighs regretfully. "If it's one of my friends, they'll find a way to break in"

"You need new friends," Kakashi murmurs, feeling irritated, "or perhaps just one friend. Me."

Iruka laughs and gently pushes him off. Kakashi cloaks his chakra now that Iruka's wards aren't doing the job.

"Ebisu-sensei?" he hears Iruka asks curiously, "how can I help you?"

“May I come in?”

“Ah, now really isn’t a good time”

“It’s about Makoto…”

“Ebisu-sensei, Makoto is doing just fine”

“The curriculum really needs to take into account his unique bloodline-”

“Ebisu-sensei,” Iruka begins patiently and Kakashi marvels over his restraint, he would have slammed the door on Ebisu’s face, “if you wish to talk about this, please find me during Academy hours”

“But-”

“It seems a little unfair, Ebisu-sensei, that just because you know where I live you come to ask me about curriculum questions after hours,” Iruka begins in his lecturing tone and Kakashi bites back his laughter, “is it really right for someone such as yourself to take such advantage of our relationship like this? When other parents, especially civilian parents, would not? It’s not like I had Hyuga Hiashi knocking on my door asking to adjust the curriculum for his daughter’s Byakugan”

“Iruka-sensei,” Ebisu sounds horrified, “you are quite right, I apologize for disturbing you”

“I’ll make time for you once classes end tomorrow,” Iruka keeps his voice pleasant, “as with all my students I have an hour block after school that I set aside for parents and guardians to discuss their children”

Kakashi resists the urge to flare his chakra. They’ve been doing this strange, secretive not-relationship relationship since the end of the war but they had been sleeping together on and off since shortly before the Chunin Exam and Kakashi understands the need for some level of discretion. Most shinobi in relationships do everything they can to not flaunt it. No sense putting one’s precious person at risk. Even in a time of relative peace it can’t hurt to be too careful.

Also, the council would decide that Kakashi’s personal life is now *their* personal life should it become public knowledge that he even *has* one. Thus far, they’ve left his personal life alone but he already told himself that if they ever press for marriage he’s going to hold a

village-wide meeting and ask Iruka to marry him in front of all of Konoha.

But Kakashi doesn't think there's a need to keep it so quiet they act like relative strangers in public. Asuma and Kurenai were an anomaly that way, but then again neither Asuma nor Kurenai were the most functional. Kakashi is also dysfunctional, but he has Iruka, who is the most functional person Kakashi knows, to balance himself out.

The fact remains that no one would guess that the Rokudaime Hokage and the Academy Vice Principal are deeply, madly in love.

Or, well, the Rokudaime Hokage is at least. Iruka's feelings towards him are a frequent source of confusion. And it's not like Kakashi can blame him either. If the last person Kakashi dated had been a childhood friend turned traitor who betrayed the village and tried to kill his surrogate son but ended up embedding a fuma shuriken in his back and had a female fiancée on the side, Kakashi would be a little hesitant too.

He also has a sneaking suspicion that there's a lot more to the story based on the fact that 'Mizuki' is a name that features regularly in some of Iruka's worst nightmares, the ones Kakashi couldn't wake him up from, even now years after the incident.

It's not like it's an issue that they're two guys either, Izumo and Kotetsu were Izumo and Kotetsu to the entire village before they were actually Izumo and Kotetsu.

Kakashi had been surprised when Iruka came home frustrated at the fact that his idiots friends still hadn't gotten their shit together. He had thought they were already together to which Iruka had given him an exasperated stare and responded that they were but they didn't know it.

Something Kakashi found thoroughly entertaining given his own relationship with someone who also didn't know he was dating someone. Except Izumo and Kotetsu seemed to figure it out after the war and their wedding had been one of the first to celebrate a newly discovered peaceful existence.

Granted, the adorable gate chunin who happen to be Iruka's best friends are a little different than the Rokudaime Hokage and Academy Vice Principal. Still, Kakashi feels a little insulted at the fact that nobody has even guessed their closer than normal relationship, even though he's not sure on who's behalf: his or Iruka's.

After all, Kakashi really doesn't let just anyone scold him and even the times Iruka had slipped and called him *anata* on multiple occasions, people just assumed it was Iruka's quirk for not respecting Kakashi's, or anyone's really, rank.

He's heard *anata* from the teacher many times; fond, exasperated, sleepy, absolutely furious. He's never once heard Iruka call anyone else that, regardless of who's rank he was disregarding that day. And he did that a lot.

A bunch of terrible shinobi to miss something so obvious, as far as Kakashi is concerned.

And speaking of terrible shinobi, why is Ebisu still at the door.

"-it was a disgrace!"

"I'm sure it was," Iruka sounds exasperated, "Ebisu-sensei, I think I left my stove on. I was in the middle of cooking dinner and I really should finish before the water boils over…I'll see you tomorrow"

"Right, sorry, Iruka-sensei. See you tomorrow"

Iruka closes the door none too gently and drops his forehead against it in exasperation. Kakashi slips up behind him and twines his arms around his middle.

"I swear Ebisu is worse than some of the parents!" Iruka rants quietly, "the man does not know when to leave me alone! It was worse with Konohamaru but that just opened the door"

"Did I ever tell you about when I first met Gai?" Kakashi asks, freeing the soft hair from the confines of the hair tie and sliding it on his wrist. He had worn one of Iruka's hair ties beneath his glove during the war as a silent reminder of why he needed to make it back alive, "he was so determined to get me to fight him that he even followed me into the bathtub once"

Iruka laughs, "I wish I could say I was surprised," he groans as Kakashi's hand slides up his shirt to tease his nipples. "Why do you think I have so many wards? Ebisu once broke into my bedroom at four in the morning to talk about Konohamaru's lesson plan. I have two wards synchronized to his chakra specifically because that was not an experience I would want to repeat"

"No, I imagine most people would not want to wake up to Ebisu in

their bedroom," Kakashi feels a flare of jealousy but it's swiftly chased by contentment as the innuendo washes over Iruka and makes him huff a laugh. "As funny as it would be to see his reaction, I doubt I have your permission to tell him he's cockblocking the Hokage and my schedule is very busy"

"*Anata*," Iruka says in that special blend of exasperated and fond and reluctantly amused that is so uniquely Iruka and gods Kakashi is stupidly in love, "be serious"

"I'm always serious when it comes to you, sensei," Kakashi smiles against his neck. He enjoys dropping hints about the depth of his feelings. He managed to stealth date Iruka into the point where the teacher had to simply admit that what they were doing was dating even if he can't get him to define their actual relationship. But that's okay. He can be a very patient man and he's in no rush. Though sometimes his hints have all the subtlety of an anvil and Iruka still won't believe him.

He doesn't understand exactly why Iruka doesn't quite believe he's serious. Maybe because Kakashi's reputation precedes him here and because Iruka doesn't view himself as someone worth pursuing romantically.

Which works out for Kakashi since he doesn't have to worry about anyone stealing Iruka from him. But it's also something of a pain because it's been six years since Kakashi somehow conned him into sleeping with him and it wasn't long ago that Iruka only just realized that they've been dating for, now, about four of them. Kakashi is looking forward to Iruka's realization that they've been pretty much been living together for a year now and the only things of Kakashi's not at Iruka's apartment are a handful of weapons he doesn't use and his old ANBU gear which hasn't seen the light of day in years.

He had started moving his things over in small batches long before he became Hokage, when it became apparent that he spent more time at Iruka's apartment than his own. Iruka didn't seem to notice the addition of two picture frames on his windowsill, or the brightly colored books interspersed with his own, or the shuriken patterned blanket that found a new home on the back of the couch, or Kakashi's jonin blacks mixed in with Iruka's laundry.

Iruka even waters Mr. Ukki.

He should probably feel a little bad about having manipulated the

chunin like this. Especially since technically he's supposed to reside in the Hokage residence.

Sure, Kakashi should probably be paying actual rent at this point, but he contributes by buying groceries and cooking, because Iruka would burn down the kitchen, and secretly paying for utilities.

It probably doesn't help that he regularly has to stay late at his office so it's not like he's around that often.

Shaking off his ANBU guard is easy enough. As long as he tells Tenzo, Tenzo won't rat him out. Probably more out of fondness for Iruka, who went out of his way to recognize all the hard work Tenzo put in to rebuilding Konoha and was the only one to do so.

Kakashi had nearly proposed on the spot but Iruka was still only just coming to terms with the fact they've been dating for nearly two years at that point. That and they were immediately thrown into a war.

And this batch of ANBU still has a few years to go before they can outclass Kakashi. There are a couple who Kakashi thinks have potential though. He suspects one to be Shikamaru and one is a Yamanaka just based on his general energy and starkly orange hair. He's been too lazy to check their files though and it's more fun trying to guess his ANBU.

"Maa, sensei"

"Hm?" Iruka turns in the cage of his arms, leaning back against the door and looking up at Kakashi, hair falling in a soft mass just below his shoulders, brown eyes warm and soft and slightly amused. He looks so unbearably beautiful like this that Kakashi forgets how to breathe for a moment.

"About that very busy schedule…"

"Oh?" Iruka feigns innocence, "I understand completely, Rokudaime-sama," he executes a graceful duck and twist to escape Kakashi's frame, "if you're too busy…"

Kakashi is faster. He has Iruka around the waist.

"What did I tell you about calling me that?" Kakashi spins him around at the same time Iruka tries to pull away and they go crashing to the ground. "Are you alright?" he asks, shifting to look down at Iruka. He had brought his hand around to protect the back of Iruka's head, but

he's still concerned.

Iruka's brown eyes are indescribably soft as he looks up at Kakashi. "I'm fine," he says, "are you?"

"As long as you are"

Iruka blushes red and hides his face behind his hands. Kakashi laughs and lowers his head to kiss the younger man as he tugs off his shirt.

"You didn't tell me you had company, Ru!"

Kakashi finds his head smothered in dark blue fabric as Iruka panics.

"What the fuck Anko?" Iruka snaps, holding the shirt over Kakashi's head to obscure his features. "What are you doing here?"

"What are you doing?" Kakashi can hear the leer in Anko's voice, "or, well, who are you doing?"

"Fucking hell Anko, if you don't leave right now I'll put a seal in your underwear drawer that turns all your underwear into chastity devices!"

Kakashi snorts at the creativity because he doesn't doubt Iruka would.

Anko screeches. "You wouldn't!"

"Try me!"

"Fine! I'm going!" Kakashi hears the window slide open, "but you'd better tell me eventually, or else"

"Goodbye, Anko!" Iruka roars. The window slams with a rattle and Iruka groans. "I hate my friends"

"You're smothering me here a bit, sensei," Kakashi says.

"Oh my god, I'm sorry," the shirt is tugged away and Kakashi blinks up at Iruka's pretty, flushed cheeks. "Sorry. I didn't know she'd do that. It's been awhile since she's just broken in like that and you didn't have your face covered…"

Kakashi feels an overwhelming surge of affection for the younger man and leans down to kiss him, sinking against warm brown skin and clinging to the person who has become his lifeline.

He knows now that he has more precious people than he had originally thought, but somehow Iruka has become the most precious. The one person in the world who knows him. Who knows him and still, somehow, is still in his life.

He thinks he understands Obito in a way he hadn't before. He knows that if anything were to ever happen to Iruka, he too would try to burn the world to the ground. He thinks Naruto wouldn't hesitate to help him either, and the two of them together would most definitely succeed.

And Iruka, *clueless Iruka*, has no idea that he has Kakashi wrapped so tightly around his finger that if Iruka wanted him to go to war he wouldn't hesitate.

Fortunately, Iruka is not the type of person to do that. Even if he did know how much power he wielded over Kakashi, he wouldn't use it nefariously. Iruka is sensible and kind, which only makes Kakashi want to give him everything even more.

He slides his hand down Iruka's pants and circles his cock.

"Ngh, Kakashi," Iruka grips his shoulders even as his hips rock in time with Kakashi's light strokes, "not here…"

"Well, at least we don't have to worry about Naruto bursting in anymore now that he's married," Kakashi laughs, remembering the time they ended up crammed together naked in Iruka's closet while Kakashi sent a clone to convince Naruto to leave.

"Hatake Kakashi, if you ever mention Naruto with your hand down my pants again, I will ensure your hand never gets another chance"

Kakashi half-chokes, half-laughs at the threat and again is almost overwhelmed with love. He tugs off Iruka's sweatpants, grateful for the younger man's inclination towards not wearing underwear at home.

"Maa, sensei," he gives one long, languid stroke that he knows will send Iruka's ire out the window, "you'd miss my hand," he dips his hand lower, brushing the soft skin of Iruka's perineum and watching as his entire body twitches. "Iruka…" he breathes out, "you have no idea how beautiful you are like this"

"Shut up," Iruka throws an arm across his burning face. He's never done well with compliments, but he does even worse when Kakashi

compliments him during intimate moments.

Which is exactly why Kakashi does it.

He's been on a years long crusade to try and fix Iruka's self-esteem issues. It's working a little. He managed to manipulate Iruka into taking the Vice Principal Exam a year ago and he passed it with flying colors despite being completely convinced of his failure. Managed to convince him to accept the position too, which was a struggle in and of itself.

"Would I lie to you?" Kakashi murmurs, gently gripping Iruka's wrists in his hands and bringing them above his head. "Do you know how many times I recorded you with the Sharingan?"

"Ngh," the blush travels down across Iruka's collarbones.

"So on those long, lonely missions I could recall everything about you," he gently traces the grooves of Iruka's abdomen.

"Kakashi," Iruka squirms and the blush darkens.

Kakashi dips his head to trail kisses down the hard planes of Iruka's toned stomach, down to his thighs, ignoring his hard, leaking cock. He kisses back up Iruka's sides, leaving dark marks against the soft skin.

Iruka is gasping and whining and squirming.

"Kakashi!" he gasped out, "stop…stop teasing!"

Kakashi rumbles a laugh against Iruka's skin before sinking his mouth down him with no warning.

Iruka's surprised shout is loud and his hips twitch. Kakashi teases him with his tongue; long, slow strokes against the vein running along the bottom, followed by teasing the flared head and sucking lightly on the tip.

He sometimes still wishes he had the Sharingan so that he could record the way Iruka's entire body trembles and the way his brown skin glistens with sweat as he throws his head back, hair tangled beneath him and eyes half-glazed.

"K-Kakashi," he gasps out, "I'm gonna-" Kakashi doubles down his effort, lowering his head until Iruka's cock is hitting the back of his throat and he swallows.

Iruka's cry is a broken, desperate thing and Kakashi swallows easily before kissing his way up Iruka's body again.

The younger man draws him down into a languid kiss, tongue chasing his own taste through Kakashi's mouth.

"I want you inside me. Now." Iruka murmurs.

Kakashi scoops Iruka up and easily carries him down the hall to the bedroom before laying him on the bed. He kicks off his own pants and settles between Iruka's legs.

Iruka's gaze tracks over his body with a flush, a glitter of blatant desire and appreciation in his dark eyes. Kakashi can feel a splotchy flush crawling along his neck and chest. Even after all these years he's not used to Iruka staring at him like he's something precious, something worth staring at. He's aware he's attractive, but something about the way Iruka appraises him is deeper than simple attraction.

Iruka shifts to his knees and pulls Kakashi close, taking his hand and drawing his fingers into his mouth. Kakashi quietly groans as Iruka sucks on his fingers, tongue swirling around them as he peeks at Kakashi through his lashes. He releases them with a quiet smacking sound, a thin string of saliva connecting them.

Kakashi pushes Iruka back down and trails his fingers down to Iruka's puckered entrance.

"*Anata*," Iruka says, voice strained, "haven't you teased me enough?" his voice pitches to a whine and Kakashi laughs.

"Not even close," Kakashi traces the rim gently, teasingly. Iruka groans and tries to rock his hips down. Kakashi allows a single finger to slide in up to his first knuckle and circles it lightly before withdrawing. Iruka grips his wrist and tries to shove his finger back inside him.

He loves when Iruka gets impatient with him. When he gets so desperate from Kakashi's teasing he lets go of any inhibitions. Kakashi slides the finger back inside and rubs his thumb against the outside as he slowly works the finger. He slides it in all the way, teasingly wiggling it until Iruka's entire body practically jolts off the bed.

"K-Kashi," Iruka tries to rock his hips down, "th-there"

Kakashi gently rubs the spot with his index finger before withdrawing

slightly. Iruka chases Kakashi's finger but Kakashi doesn't let him. He spends several minutes teasing Iruka almost to tears with one single finger. As soon as Iruka's bitten off threats and complaints have dissolved into incoherent garble, Kakashi withdraws his finger and coats them in lube before returning two of them.

He stills his hand and watches as Iruka fucks himself on his fingers. Gasping and desperate, searching for the spot inside him that Kakashi knows he could find simply by curling his fingers.

Which he does, throwing off Iruka's rhythm and earning a full body shudder. Kakashi is reaching the ends of his own patience so he slips another finger inside him and focuses on stretching him open.

"Kashi, please," Iruka whimpers, "please…"

"When you ask so pretty," Kakashi exhales, slicking his cock, shuddering at his own touch, "how can I do anything but comply?" he slides in easily and smoothly.

Iruka cries out in relief. Kakashi rocks his hips a bit before pulling back and thrusting in all the way. Iruka grips Kakashi's arms as he arches off the bed.

"You're so beautiful," Kakashi murmurs, "you look so good taking my cock, it slid so easily inside you like you were made for it, made for me"

An incoherent mumble leaves Iruka's lips.

"Feels…good…" Iruka whimpers, "inside me…"

Kakashi shudders at Iruka's broken words and his next thrust goes wayward and a little harder than he intended. Iruka yelps and digs his fingers in.

"Please," Iruka whispers, "wreck me"

Kakashi sucks in a sharp breath. Usually, he holds back a bit of his true strength because he doesn't want to hurt Iruka. There's been a few times where Kakashi has completely lost control and been no better than a rutting animal. It always left Iruka limping for a day or two and choosing to stand over sit.

"Are you sure?" Kakashi pants. Iruka nods.

Kakashi slides out before flipping Iruka onto his stomach. He grips his hands, pulling his arms behind his back so Iruka's face is pressed into the pillow. Iruka groans in anticipation and wiggles his hips slightly.

"I want to feel it for days," Iruka says, muffled. That's all Kakashi needs and he picks up a brutal pace using his arms as leverage. The harsh sound of flesh smacking against flesh makes Kakashi think that Iruka's thighs and backside are going to be red for a couple of days.

He knows his grip on Iruka's forearms is going to bruise. He knows Iruka is going to be feeling this and that thought just turns him on even more.

Iruka's face is pressed into the pillow, muffling his sounds and Kakashi isn't having that. He transfers Iruka's wrists into one hand and fists the other in the silky hair, forcing his head back without breaking his pace before sliding his hand down to cup his cheek and hook three fingers into Iruka's mouth.

The muffled sounds that tumble from Iruka's lips spur Kakashi on and he's a little bit surprised that he hasn't broken the bed frame with the force he's using. Tears slide down Iruka's cheeks as he meets each of Kakashi's thrusts. Before Iruka, Kakashi had never had anyone cry during sex and the first time it had happened, Kakashi had panicked when he saw the dried tear tracks. Now, Kakashi knows that if Iruka starts to cry it's either because whatever Kakashi is doing is amazing or he's overwhelmed with emotion.

It doesn't take long for the pleasure to crest in Kakashi. He releases his grip on Iruka's face, trailing his wet fingers down his neck to his back. He drags his fingernails down the incredibly sensitive skin of Iruka's scar and Iruka all but screams as he comes; his release splattering against the comforter.

The tight clenching of Iruka's passage as Kakashi fucks him through his release until he's trembling from overstimulation is what pushes Kakashi himself over the edge and he comes deep inside the younger man.

He slides out of Iruka as Iruka falls to the bed facedown. Kakashi joins him a moment later, cuddling him close.

Iruka is barely awake when Kakashi finally cleans him off and strips down the messy comforter. He lightly traces his fingers along Iruka's side as he dozes.

Seconds before Kakashi is about to fall asleep, he realizes something.

Iruka hadn't said he covered his face because he didn't want Anko to know who he was, but for Kakashi's sake.

He shifts to look at Iruka, splayed facedown with his hair spilling around his shoulders and covering his face. Kakashi lightly traces the fading scar in the center of his back. He remembers being shocked by how large it was the first time he had seen it. He gently strokes Iruka's hair out of his face.

He wonders if Iruka would be okay with people knowing.

Chapter End Notes

> idk why I like to pick on everyone's favorite closet pervert ebisu. he's just so…bullyable.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“*Anata*, what are you doing here?” Iruka sighs. Kakashi makes a face and uncloaks his chakra.

“I suppose it’s true they say teachers have eyes in the backs of their head”

“Occupational hazard,” Iruka leans back against his desk and crosses his arms. Kakashi admires the way the dark blue fabric of a high-ranking school administrator uniform stretches across his broad shoulders. The vests really weren’t doing Iruka any favors. “I wouldn’t be alive if I couldn’t tell when my students were doing something they really shouldn’t. Or when Rokudaimes are somewhere they really shouldn’t be”

Kakashi grins.

“Just wanted to see how you were settling in on your first day, Vice Principal-sensei,” he says, glancing around the office.

“You know I’m no longer sensei, right?” Iruka raises an eyebrow.

“Maa, you’ll always be sensei to me, Iruka-sensei,” Kakashi winks. “It feels wrong to call you anything else”

Iruka shakes his head, running his fingers absentmindedly against the grain of his desk.

“It’s strange being in here and not in a classroom,” he says, a note of longing. “Earlier I made rounds to see how the teachers were handling their classes, but I think I just made them nervous,” he scratches his scar, a tick he hasn’t done in awhile. The change of behavior does not go unnoticed by Kakashi who has by now memorized all of Iruka’s little ticks and knows a change in behavior means he’s more affected by something than he lets on.

“Hey,” Kakashi gently catches his hand and threads their fingers together before resting his forehead against Iruka’s, “you’ll get used to it. Besides, instead of twenty-four germ vectors, you have a whole school of them. And you’ll have the auxiliary classes for those who fail

their jonin instructor's exam"

"Don't call them germ vectors," Iruka groans, squeezing Kakashi's hand. "It's just weird…" he sighs, "and you never answered my question. What are you doing here?"

"I told you, sensei, I wanted to see how you were settling in. As Hokage, I should be aware of how everyone in the village is doing"

"Okay, now what's the real reason?" Iruka spears him with that look. The look that has probably gotten many a pre-genin to spill every prank they've ever tried to pull.

Unfortunately it works on Kakashi too.

"I missed you," he says honestly, "I had a break in between meetings and wanted to come see you since I knew you'd probably be all in here," he lightly taps the side of Iruka's head.

Iruka's expression softens and he pulls down Kakashi's mask to kiss him, soft and sweet and lingering.

"You're sweet," Iruka sighs, fingers gently hooked through the front collar of Kakashi's grey armor. "I am a little lost, I suppose. I'm not even sure what I'm supposed to do today"

"Well, I would assume the paperwork that you finished two days ago," Kakashi remembers Iruka's almost manic paperwork efforts. He had spent two weeks revising lesson plans, reviewing the disciplinary actions, ordering textbooks and office supplies, planning the emergency drills, and like ten other things that Kakashi can't even remember because it was so hard to keep track of. Kakashi is pretty sure Iruka went a week without sleeping or eating anything more than instant ramen. It had gotten so bad that Kakashi had finally stepped in, hidden his paperwork and carried him into the bedroom where he refused to get off of him until Iruka actually slept. Unable to do anything but acquiesce, Iruka had slept a full forty-eight hours.

Iruka's tendency to overwork himself, especially when he's stressed, is one of the things Kakashi both loves and hates about him.

He's also pretty sure the Academy paperwork is finished for the entire school year at this point.

"I don't have a whole lot of paperwork," Kakashi says, "so I'll probably finish early and wanted to take you out somewhere"

Iruka studies him before smiling softly.

“Alright”

“Somewhere other than Ichiraku’s by the way,” Kakashi winks. “There’s this place that opened up near the jonin dorms. Gai wouldn’t shut up about it, and even Tenzo enjoyed it”

“How are those two?”

“Sickeningly in love,” Kakashi says cheerfully, perching on Iruka’s desk, pulling Iruka towards him until the younger man is standing between his legs, twining the fingers of both their hands together and spreading their arms, “Tenzo goes all gooey eyed and Gai’s speeches about the Youthfulness of Love have increased in vigor,” he brings their arms back in before spreading them again. “I didn’t think I’d ever see Tenzo, or Gai for that matter, like this”

Iruka watches Kakashi mess around with their arms, using their linked hands as leverage, an expression of soft fondness on his face.

“You’re happy for them”

“Maa, it gives me great fodder for picking on Tenzo. Gai is a bit harder to pick on”

Iruka gives him a look that says he knows Kakashi is evading and Kakashi pulls Iruka’s arms over his shoulders, hands settling on his waist.

“*Anata*, we’re at the Academy, what have I said”

“I just want to stay like this for a bit,” Kakashi drops his forehead on Iruka’s shoulder, “that’s all”

Iruka sighs and Kakashi feels the arms draped over his shoulders wrap around his neck.

“You’re impossible, you know that, right?”

“You’d get bored of me if I wasn’t,” Kakashi says, only half-joking.

“Hey,” Iruka’s fingers tap beneath his chin and Kakashi looks up into his face, a slight frown creasing his brow, “even if you were the most boring person on the face of the planet, I’d still feel the way I do”

“Really?”

“Where’s this coming from, *anata*?”

Kakashi shrugs. Iruka sighs. “It’s one of those times?” Kakashi nods. Sometimes he gets bouts of insecurity over their relationship. He’s never been able to pinpoint exactly what triggers them, but Iruka always seems to know how to pull him out. “Go back to your office and finish up your paperwork. I get done at the Mission Desk at six-thirty then we can go get dinner, okay?”

“Sounds like a plan,” Kakashi murmurs, studying Iruka’s face. He never would have expected to fall this hopelessly, irrefutably in love with anyone. But the thought of Iruka no longer being in his life for any reason terrifies him and he holds Iruka as tight as he can.

He feels more than hears the younger man sigh and a broad hand comes up to gently ruffle his hair.

“I’m not going anywhere, Kakashi,” Iruka says gently. “And I’m not letting you go anywhere either”

Kakashi knows it’s a foolish thing to promise, but he can’t help it. He wants so desperately for it to be true.

“Promise?”

“Promise”

Kakashi tugs down his mask and captures Iruka’s lips in a kiss.

“I’ll see you tonight then,” he hops off the desk, “we can celebrate your successful first day as Vice Principal”

“Looking forward to it,” Iruka smiles.

Kakashi slides out the window, making his way back to his office. He’s grateful his paperwork load is light because he’ll be able to finish in time.

Over the years, there’s one things Kakashi has actually corrected. His perpetual tardiness. Oh, he’s still late to annoying things like council meetings, but he knows that as the Hokage he’s a reflection on Konoha and has to be a responsible adult.

The one thing he’s never been late for, ever, is when he makes plans with Iruka.

Kakashi masks his chakra and lurks outside the Mission Room, in an

alcove that casts a convenient shadow. Iruka had reluctantly been dragged into the role of Mission Room Supervisor. Usually a role that goes to a jonin, but Iruka's extensive experience and the work he did on streamlining the process made him uniquely qualified for it.

Iruka's gaze flicks to the shadow Kakashi is hiding in. Kakashi remembers the discussion at Ichiraku's about Iruka's sensing ability.

So that explains why Iruka has always been able to find him.

"See you later, Yosuke-san," Iruka waves off one of his former students who recently started working there as he locks up. "You have morning shift, right?"

"Yup. I like morning shift," Yosuke says cheerfully, baby fat still rounding his cheeks. Kakashi feels old.

"Do you want me to schedule you for mornings?"

"Are you sure?"

"I can't promise you won't have a few evening shifts sometimes, but I like to take preference in mind when scheduling"

"You're amazing Iruka-sensei!" the kid says happily, "it's just, when everyone gets back from missions we go out in the evenings and-"

"Believe it or not, I was young once too," Iruka says, a note of amusement in his voice, "I know how it is"

"You're the best, sensei," the kid is practically vibrating with happiness.

"Hey, I'm not your sensei anymore"

"It feels wrong to call you anything else," his face crinkles up. Iruka laughs quietly.

"Someone else said exactly the same thing earlier," he sighs. "Have a good evening Yosuke-ku-san"

"Bye sensei!"

"You can stop hiding now, you know"

Kakashi unmasks his chakra and slips up next to Iruka, brushing a quick masked kiss to his cheek.

“Like it or not, sensei,” Kakashi teases, “you’ll always be sensei”

Iruka shakes his head with a smile. “It’s nice though,” he says wistfully.

“You couldn’t stay a teacher forever,” Kakashi briefly squeezes his hand, “it was time for you to advance. Maybe next you’ll finally take the tokubetsu jonin exam”

“Be serious, Kakashi-san,” Iruka says. The use of san tells Kakashi he’s verging on dangerous territory.

“I am serious, sensei,” he easily keeps pace with Iruka, leading him down the street. Kakashi has always had a unique lack of presence, it served him well active duty and it serves him well now. No one bothers to look twice at him, despite Iruka receiving several greetings. “I think you should consider it. Before, you didn’t want to risk being pulled from teaching, but what’s holding you back now?”

Iruka looks conflicted.

“I don’t even know what I’d specialize in”

“Fuinjutsu, barrier jutsu, hell you could even make use of that sensing ability and go as a sensor”

“I’ve told you, it’s not a strong ability and I don’t have time to train it”

“Fuinjutsu or barrier control then,” Kakashi hums. “You could do it, easily”

“If I become tokubetsu jonin…” Iruka trails off as they reach the restaurant bar.

“You’d be eligible for the role of principal,” Kakashi holds the door open, “is that why you hold back?”

“I don’t know,” Iruka admits. It’s early enough that the restaurant is not busy and Kakashi leads Iruka to a relatively secluded booth against the back wall. “I don’t know why I get nervous at the thought of advancement”

“Because you’re afraid of failing,” Kakashi says. Iruka looks at the menu. “I know you, sensei, advancing means more responsibilities, unfamiliar responsibilities. And you’re afraid of being unable to fulfill those responsibilities and disappointing people”

Iruka closes his eyes as the waitress comes by and they place their orders.

“I guess”

“But you don’t realize you’re already taking on those responsibilities,” Kakashi points out, “Mission Desk Supervisor is typically a jonin or tokubetsu jonin. And your role as Vice Principal exempts you from the mission quota so you can’t be forced on missions except by Hokage edict. Which, even if I was so inclined to send you away from me,” Iruka gives him a look, “we’re in a time of peace and there are plenty of shinobi who are on active duty so it would be unnecessary”

“*Anata*, what did we talk about. Your role as Hokage has nothing to do with our relationship. If a mission came down and I was the best suited for it, I would expect you to assign it to me”

“If I felt you were the only option, I would,” Kakashi says firmly, “but like I said, given the times we’re living in now, there’s enough active duty shinobi that I don’t have to. You’re trying to change the topic”

Iruka flushes red. “I-”

“I’m not telling you what to do, sensei,” Kakashi says gently, heading off an outburst, “I’m just saying that I think you would be more than prepared to take the tokubetsu jonin exam”

“…I’ll think about it?”

“That’s all I ask,” Kakashi reaches across the table to squeeze Iruka’s hand. He marvels at the fact that he no longer has the urge to provoke Iruka’s anger.

He supposes that now he has Iruka’s attention he doesn’t need to provoke him to get it. Either that or he’s just getting old.

How depressing.

The topic switches to Iruka’s first day as their food comes. Kakashi feels relatively secure in leaving his mask down instead of shoveling food like normal.

Apparently Iruka is going to have to assign a new head teacher because Mai-sensei is going out on maternity leave, so he spent all day determining who the best candidate is.

Kakashi watches fondly as Iruka talks animatedly, hands gesturing. He has moments where he just feels so overwhelmed with love when he looks at Iruka. There's no rhyme or reason for why or when or what brings it on.

He belatedly realizes Iruka has stopped talking and is watching him with a bemused fondness.

"Sorry," Kakashi laughs, "I was just thinking about how much I like your smile"

Iruka's face flames red and Kakashi grins.

"Mine can't hold a candle to yours," he mumbles into his rice. Kakashi takes the risk to lean over the table and kiss him.

Marry me

The thought crosses Kakashi's mind with such force it shocks him. And it won't leave his mind. He had realized that, after dying and reviving during Pain's attack, Iruka was his most important person and he wanted to spend the rest of his life with him. But he hadn't thought about marriage until just now.

"Sensei"

"Hm?"

"What do you think about marriage?"

"What do you mean?"

"Ah, just a thought," he laughs, losing his nerve, "something you said made me think about Tenzo and Gai"

"Do you think-?"

"Maybe. I could see it. I would be afraid the wedding would be very… green"

Iruka scrunches his face adorably.

"Captain Yamato would not allow it"

"Tenzo would let Gai insist on green spandex jumpsuits for all wedding guests, he's that in love," Kakashi says, knowing full well he'd probably do anything Iruka asked too.

“Ah,” Iruka looks amused. “I imagine the guests would suddenly have very important missions come up”

“Had you ever thought about it?” Kakashi probes, grateful Iruka is dense as hell for these things.

“What? A wedding with green jumpsuits? No, the thought never crossed my mind, thankfully”

“No, a wedding in general”

“Oh,” Iruka looks thoughtful and Kakashi holds his breath. “You know, I don’t think I ever have. I guess I had a vague notion of probably getting married at some point, but nothing defined”

“I hadn’t considered it at all,” he murmurs, not before you tonight, “I didn’t think I’d even make it to this age. I always expected to die young on a mission”

Iruka nods. “I guess it’s hard to plan for a future when our lives are so unpredictable”

Kakashi feels like he’s learned something big. Iruka is not opposed to marriage, so it would be possible. Though he thinks if he is going to ask, it will have to be after he retires from being Hokage. Too difficult otherwise.

They’re leaving the restaurant when a call of Iruka’s name stops them.

Genma sways in front of them, clearly inebriated.

“Irukaaaa-kun,” he pulls Iruka into a clumsy hug and smacks a sloppy kiss to his cheek, Kakashi resists the urge to shove Genma away, “come party!”

“Genma-san,” Iruka says easily, disentangling from Genma’s grasp. “You look like you’re having a good time”

“K-Kakashi?” Genma blinks, finally registering his presence.

“Yo”

“You…” he squints between the two of them and sways slightly, “this is just too weird”

Kakashi wonders what Iruka would think if Genma figured it out. Would he be upset? Embarrassed?

“Of course the Hokage would talk Academy business in a bar,” Genma snorts, “but I never expected this from you, sensei,” he leers, “or should I say vice principal?” his gaze drags down Iruka’s body, “you make that uniform look damn good”

Kakashi blinks. And then blinks again. Pushing the jealousy at Genma ogling Iruka aside…

No way is Genma really this oblivious, is he?

Would it be so strange that Kakashi and Iruka are on a date?

“Thank you Genma-san,” Iruka keeps his voice professional and polite, “perhaps you should drink some water”

“Can I buy you a drink instead?”

“Sorry,” Iruka holds up a hand, “Kakashi and I were just leaving,” Kakashi picks up on the lack of honorific and internally does a happy dance. “Perhaps some other time”

“I’ll hold you to that, sensei,” Genma leers, stumbling slightly to the side before getting distracted by a blonde waitress walking by.

“Can you please bring him a water?” Iruka asks the waitress with a charming smile. She giggles at Genma’s wink and nods. “Have a fun night, Genma-san, hopefully you wake up feeling fine tomorrow”

“Ever so considerate, sensei,” Genma sighs dreamily, “that’s one of the things that makes you so goddam attractive”

Iruka’s blush is burgundy in the dim lighting.

“Well,” Kakashi drawls, placing a hand on Iruka’s back, “we were just leaving”

Genma pouts. It’s weird seeing a grown man pout around a senbon. “Sure you don’t wanna stay for some fun sensei?”

“Not tonight, Genma-san”

“The formality is wounding,” Genma sighs dramatically, “I thought we were closer than that…” he gets distracted by the waitress bringing him his water and Kakashi takes the opportunity to grab Iruka’s hand and pull him through the crowd.

They emerge into the warm night and Iruka laughs.

“I didn’t think he’d ever shut up,” Kakashi grumbles, lacing their fingers together.

Iruka shakes his head. “It’s nice to know some things never change,” he smiles slightly, “Genma-san will always be a hopeless flirt”

“He doesn’t flirt like that with just anybody,” Kakashi frowns. Iruka squeezes his hand.

“He’s so gone over Raido that that’s all it ever is,” Iruka says, “I really thought they were going to get their shit together”

“I’m surprised he didn’t realize the truth,” Kakashi says, feeling a bit disheartened. He’s unsure why Genma automatically assuming they were together at a bar for professional purposes bothers him so much.

“He was wasted,” Iruka laughs. “His observational skills decrease by half”

“Still. Is it really that unfathomable that us being out somewhere together has nothing to do with work?”

Iruka shrugs. “I can’t really blame them,” he laughs almost nervously, “aside from the fact that we’re not usually seen together, you’re you and I’m me”

“What does that mean, sensei?”

“Means exactly that,” Iruka says, “you’re the Rokudaime Hokage. And even before that, you were Konoha’s most infamous and powerful and mysterious shinobi. I’m the disrespectful paperwork chunin who spends more of his time around children than adults and hasn’t seen a mission above C-rank in years. You and I have always led very different lives. By all rights, our only connection is Naruto and the only substantial public interaction we’ve had was the Chunin Exam disaster. When have we ever given anyone any reason to think anything further?”

Kakashi wants to protest, but he knows Iruka is right to some extent.

“Still, as you said, our connection to Naruto. Is it really that unbelievable that we wouldn’t interact?”

“Not in any manner aside from professional. Which is exactly what Genma-san assumed”

Kakashi sighs and stares at the sky.

“Does it bother you?” Iruka asks curiously.

“It’s just annoying. But I don’t know why”

Iruka laughs softly.

“*Anata*, you’re a funny man. It’s always a surprise with you”

“I hope that’s a good thing,” Kakashi winks, squeezing his hand.

“Everything about you is good, Kakashi,” Iruka says quietly.

Kakashi stumbles over his own feet, breathless and stunned into silence.

No one has ever said anything like that to him. Kakashi doesn’t even consider anything about himself good.

Iruka seems to sense his thoughts because he squeezes his hand.

Kakashi decides his newest goal is to get Iruka to marry him.

Chapter End Notes

this fic is literally just fluff 😌
also a village full of shinobi failing at seeing the obvious

Chapter 6

Kakashi stretches, sprawling forward on his desk in a heap.

“Shodaime’s balls,” he mumbles, “no wonder Tsunade drank like she did”

The Fire Country Daimyo is visiting Konoha this week. Kakashi has already spent the first half of it entertaining the man. It’s not so bad, Kakashi actually likes him well enough. He’s got a witty sort of humor and when he’s drunk enough, the man can get downright raunchy. A big fan of Icha Icha, they usually have a lot to talk about when they’re not having to play the political nicety game and act like upstanding citizens who are responsible for a bunch of other citizens.

It’s the rest of the entourage that Kakashi wants to Chidori. Simpering civilian morons who are impressed by something as simple as a body flicker.

Kakashi doesn’t usually mind civilians. Just these ones in particular. Kakashi is always up for a little ass-kissing in the most literal sense possible , but only if it’s Iruka.

Who he hasn’t had a chance to see for more than a couple of hours this entire week. Which may be contributing to his less than charitable thoughts.

He peers out the window and perks up.

As if summoned by his thoughts, Iruka is walking with Ebisu-sensei.

Kakashi prickles slightly. He’s always been confused and a little irked by Ebisu’s feelings towards Iruka. Sometimes he suspects if the tokujo was more like Gai, he’d be declaring Iruka his Eternal Rival, yet sometimes he thinks Ebisu stares at Iruka far too long when he thinks the latter isn’t looking.

He’s well-aware of Ebisu’s not so secret reputation as, in Naruto’s words, a closet pervert.

Ebisu once broke into my bedroom at four in the morning

Kakashi’s fingers twitch involuntarily.

In the early days of their arrangement, Kakashi had kept his jealousy

under wraps. It hadn't always been easy, he wasn't the only one who was drawn in by Iruka, fortunately for him Iruka is completely clueless to people expressing interest.

Kakashi still laughs at the memory of a chunin asking Iruka to have lunch with him and perhaps discuss lesson plans, said so suggestively that there couldn't possibly be any room for misunderstanding, only to have Iruka brighten up and pull out a binder as thick as Kakashi's forearm.

He still remembers the disbelieving expression on the chunin's face as his friends teased him all the way out the door. Iruka had been baffled by the sudden retreat and one of his gate guard friends had simply patted him on the shoulder while stifling his obvious amusement.

Kakashi's seen similar instances happen a couple other times.

He's gotten better at not getting jealous over the years. It's still hard, sometimes, especially when he's going through one of his bouts of insecurity and just waiting for Iruka to realize he's a mess and up and leave him. Or that someone who's hands aren't so bloodstained and who can handle emotions like a grownup will sweep in and charm Iruka off his feet.

By now they've been together so long and Iruka has reassured him many times, it seems almost silly at this point. There are only three people who make Kakashi prickle; Ebisu simply because he doesn't trust him, a jonin named Tekuno who has the same fondness for traps, and a soft-spoken Nara with a toddler.

He watches as Iruka pats Ebisu almost awkwardly on the shoulder before he leaves.

Kakashi swears Ebisu is staring at Iruka's ass.

Not that he can blame him, considering it is a very nice add and he is doing the same exact thing, but the fact remains that Kakashi has the right and Ebisu does not.

"Kakashi-sama?"

"Drop the sama, please," he feels like a broken record.

"The meeting with the Daimyo's advisor is in thirty minutes"

"Yup"

“And the dinner tomorrow, here’s the attendees”

Kakashi half-heartedly skims the list until a name pops out.

“Is this right?” he queries.

Shizune glances over. “Yes. Both Principal Homura and Iru-, Vice Principal Umino are supposed to be in attendance”

“Great,” Kakashi says, scrunching his eyes in a smile. Shizune gives him an odd look but doesn’t comment.

If Kakashi feels a little bit more perky through the advisor meeting than usual, it’s not like anyone could tell.

That night, he ditches his ANBU guards (again) before making his way to their apartment.

Iruka is sitting at his desk, writing something down when Kakashi slides in through the window. He wraps his arms around Iruka’s neck, tugs down his mask, and breathes in the familiar and soothing scent of chalk and green tea and the faint hint of lemongrass shampoo.

“*Anata*”

“I’ve missed you,” Kakashi says, feeling his nerves settle at even just being in Iruka’s presence. He feels a bit like a broken mug being slowly glued back together and buries his face against Iruka’s neck. “I’m exhausted”

“Daimyo’s visit wearing you out?” Iruka reaches up to gently scratch his scalp and Kakashi all but melts.

“I hate people,” Kakashi bemoans, “why can’t you henge into me and talk to people? You’re good at it”

“That’s not how it works, *anata*”

“I know that,” Kakashi presses his head into Iruka’s hand, feeling the exhaustion roll over him in a slow wave. “The Daimyo himself is fine, we spent most of last evening lamenting the fact that with Jiraiya gone, there’s no new Icha Icha,” Iruka makes a sound that’s a cross between disapproving and amused, “I never thought I’d say this, but I’d rather do a thousand hours of paperwork than endure interacting with this many people for this long”

“Look on the bright side, there’s only three more days. Friday, the

Daimyo and his entourage will be at the Academy all day, then they leave on Sunday. And it's not like this is a common occurrence"

Kakashi huffs his displeasure gently against Iruka's ear.

"I saw you walking with Ebisu-sensei today"

"Ah," Iruka shakes his head, "that man, I swear"

"Seemed like a pretty intense discussion"

"What's intense is my desire to get that man to settle down," Iruka shakes his head, ponytail brushing Kakashi's cheek, "I thought it was bad with Konohamaru, but he's got a new kid he's tutoring, Sato Makoto, apparently he's the son of the Daimyo's cousin and has some rare bloodline limit inherited from his mother"

"About that," Kakashi scratches the back of his head. "Did Principal Homura tell you about the dinner tomorrow night?"

"Yes," Iruka sighs, "I'm not looking forward to it"

"Me neither," Kakashi winces. Iruka squeezes his hand in sympathy, before pressing a kiss to the back.

"Are you able to stay tonight?" Iruka asks.

"I am, but I may not be much fun," Kakashi admits, feeling the bone-deep weariness now that he's somewhere he feels safe, like he can relax and let down his guard.

"Just having you here is enough," Iruka says, "besides, I'm pretty exhausted too"

"We need a vacation. A long one"

"Wouldn't that be nice," Iruka snorts. "Go shower and change. Have you eaten dinner?"

"I'm not letting you near the kitchen"

"Takeout is easy," Iruka rolls his eyes.

Kakashi kisses his cheek.

"I'll be back in a bit!" Iruka calls as Kakashi steps into the shower. He forgoes his usual soap in favor of Iruka's.

In a familiar, comforting environment, surrounding by a familiar, comforting scent, Kakashi actually takes his time to shower and lets the tension of the last few days wash down the drain with the last of lemongrass scented soap bubbles.

He's always amazed at how even just being in Iruka's presence is like a battery for him, the familiar chakra an anchor.

Toweling off, he throws on a pair of worn out regulation blacks that are soft from too-many washings and flops onto the couch, dozing while he waits for Iruka to return. Maybe he can get through the next three days.

Iruka's choice for dinner is a couple of their favorite pre-packed bentos from the twenty-four hour convenience store and Kakashi refuses to let go of Iruka's hand while they eat, much to the younger man's amusement.

He's grateful Iruka is willing to put up with his bizarre behavior and nonsensical quirks because Iruka has somehow become his lifeline.

The thought of life without him feels very bleak but the thoughts also linger in the back of his head with a little more insistence than normal.

"You're awfully clingy tonight," Iruka teases as he gets up and Kakashi follows like a lost puppy, hands still entwined.

"I've missed you"

"I've missed you too," Iruka smiles and Kakashi's heart does a happy little flip.

He sits outside the bathroom while Iruka showers, dozing lightly and checked into Iruka's familiar chakra. Iruka's expression when he sees him outside is fond, a little exasperated and infinitely warm and Kakashi takes his proffered hand, allowing Iruka to lead him to the bed.

When Kakashi wakes the next morning, he feels like he's been completely reset. The thought of dragging through the day with the Daimyo no longer feels quite so daunting. And he gets to see Iruka that evening too.

"You seem happy this morning," the man greets him outside Hokage Tower.

“Slept well,” Kakashi responds, “how about you? The accommodations to your liking?”

“Indeed,” the Daimyo smiles, “my wife was actually wondering who did your interior decorating”

“I can have my assistant get you their name”

“Excellent!” the Daimyo claps his hands, “did you hear the latest news about the new Icha Icha movie they’re making?”

Chapter 7

The dinner rolls around and Kakashi is fidgeting with his Hokage robes. Gods he hates them. They're heavy and starchy and scratchy and they smell like mothballs. He has to double up his mask just to try and tolerate the way the smell is so close to his sensitive nose.

The one bright side to the entire thing is that Iruka will be there. Maybe he can hide behind Iruka the entire night and let him do the talking and fielding of questions.

At the very least, he'll have somebody to talk to who's sternum he doesn't want to Chidori.

Iruka had, annoyingly, offered to go ahead of time to help Shizune with setting up. Kakashi would have liked to have spent some time with him before being paraded around and forced to listen to nauseating praise and simpering verbal cock-sucking.

He'd much rather it be real cock-sucking from a very specific vice principal, but Iruka had been adamant about not in the Hokage's robes because of Sandaime.

Steeling himself, he enters the venue with Tenzo on one side and Ox, an orange-haired ANBU who he suspects to be a Yamanaka, on the other.

Immediately he's accosted by some member of the Daimyo's court. He keeps his expression and his tone neutral as the man sings his praises, despite wanting to scrape off his crawling skin.

It's only been thirty minutes and his nerves are buzzing like a bunch of angry bees. Everything about this situation is at war with his instincts as a shinobi; too many people in close quarters passing too close to his back, food and drink being ferried around unwatched, the venue itself has massive windows along all sides which could provide a sharpshooting enemy ample time to line up their shot and unwieldy attire that prevents fast reactions.

He had been advised by the council not to bring weapons, but that didn't stop him from keeping several senbon tucked in his sleeve and a small line of kunai and shuriken strapped to his thighs.

He knows he should rely on his ANBU to handle any threats, but

Kakashi hasn't survived as long as he has by relying solely on others.

"Ah, you must be Umino Iruka"

Kakashi turns his attention to where Iruka is standing, talking to the principal. They've just been approached by someone from the Daimyo's entourage.

Why is this someone talking to Iruka?

"I am Sato Hijiri, you have my son Makoto in your Academy"

"Oh!" Iruka's smile is warm as he bows, "pleased to meet you, Sato-sama, we are honored the Daimyo's family considered our Academy to educate their young minds"

Ah, this must be the Daimyo's cousin. Kakashi studies him.

The cousin is movie-star handsome: tall, tanned skin and bright leaf-green eyes. His sandy-blonde hair falls below his shoulders and is pulled half-back with an elaborate wooden comb.

His kimono is a rich navy blue, hakama patterned in gold rushes and small geometric shapes and a gold obi sash, his haori is navy embroidered with gold along the sleeve cuffs with the emblem of Fire Country emblazoned on the back.

"Please, call me Hijiri," his teeth are perfect; straight and white and his smile only makes his features more handsome, "I hear you're one of Konoha's best teachers"

The blush that scalds Iruka's face is practically burgundy. It makes something uncomfortable shift in Kakashi's chest.

"I don't know about that…" Iruka's hand moves to scratch his scar before he thinks about it and clasps his hands behind his back.

"You personally taught Uzumaki Naruto, and his classmates"

"Ah, Naruto is a good kid!" Iruka waves a hand, looking grateful to be on familiar ground, "but yes, his class was one of my first after becoming a full-fledged instructor and it contained some of the brightest minds I've ever seen. I must admit, I'm a bit humbled by the great things those kids have gone on to do," Iruka's smile is impossibly fond.

"I must say, I'm rather surprised, pleasantly, of course. You are rather

young for the role of Vice Principal, must be a testament to your skill as an educator"

Kakashi bristles. Iruka hates compliments. *Can this asshole not see how uncomfortable he is?* Even his hands are blushing.

"I, really, it's not…" he gives in and rubs his scar, "I mean, I like teaching," he finishes lamely.

The Daimyo's cousin laughs warmly. "I apologize, sincerely, I did not mean to make you uncomfortable. Would you mind sitting down with me and telling me a bit about Makoto's progress?"

"Certainly," Iruka visibly snaps back into professional mode, "unfortunately, I can only pull his records. You might also wish to speak to his tutor, Ebisu, or his homeroom teacher, Sadoru. Both are fine educators and could probably tell you far more than I could"

"I suppose I will also set up some time to speak with them as well then"

Liar. Kakashi thinks, narrowing his eyes as Iruka allows the Daimyo's cousin to guide him to a seat, hand hovering barely above his back.

"Senpai?"

"What"

"Your killing intent is leaking out"

Kakashi startles, pulling in his chakra. Normally, he'd be able to hide it better, but he's still getting used to the vastness of his new reserves.

Fortunately all of the Daimyo's court are chakra null. The few who did notice something clearly aren't able to pinpoint what it is or where it's coming from.

He glances to where Iruka and the cousin, Hijiri, are deep in conversation. Iruka is talking animatedly about something. Hijiri is watching him with an intensity that makes Kakashi prickle.

Unfortunately, he's pulled away by the Daimyo himself and has to suffer through social niceties while trying not to glare daggers at the man who is now sitting a little too close to Iruka, who is blushing at something he said.

The dinner drags on agonizingly long and Kakashi is ready to summon

a clone and flee. He hates being in the spotlight, preferring to hide in the shadows. This attention on him and the expectation that he interacts with other humans makes his skin crawl. Not only does the situation itself have him on edge but he has he had to watch as the Daimyo's cousin monopolizes Iruka's attention and gets a little too comfortable with him, there's no way they've talked this long just about the kid, and he's been forced into more conversations in one night than he probably had through the entirety of his teenage years. To make matters worse, he hasn't even been able to so much as say hello to Iruka.

Shizune is sending him sympathetic glances. Kakashi knows her well enough now to be able to tell she's also uncomfortable by the situation.

Any shinobi would be.

Escaping from some simpering court maiden asking pointed questions about his personal life, he picks his way through the crowd to where Iruka and the stupid cousin are sitting so he can eavesdrop on what they're saying.

"I never would have guessed," Hijiri is laughing, "I couldn't even imagine how you do it, Iruka-san, you have my utmost respect"

Kakashi gags to himself.

"They can be one giant headache," Iruka says fondly, "but when they finally grasp a concept they've been struggling with or find something that resonates with them, something that they enjoy, there is nothing better than seeing that expression on their faces and honestly, seeing what my kids go on to do with their lives is one of the most rewarding things ever"

"It's clear you care very deeply," Hijiri's hand covers Iruka's and Kakashi sees red. He slips behind a pillar and gestures.

"Tenzo"

"Senpai…how many times have I told you to call me by my codename in uniform?"

"Later," Kakashi waves his hand, "I need you to cause a distraction at the Academy"

"Senpai?"

“I need to do something to get Iruka away from him,” he gestures to where Iruka is laughing at something the Daimyo’s cousin is saying. He can feel Tenzo’s vague disbelief. “Otherwise I’m going to do something that will cause an incident with the Daimyo”

Tenzo sighs. “Alright. I’ll see what I can do”

Kakashi watches for a couple of agonizingly long minutes as Iruka and Hijiri continue to converse. Hijiri’s hand settles on Iruka’s forearm and Iruka tucks a stray strand of hair behind his ear.

Kakashi can’t wait for Tenzo’s distraction. Ox twitches at his killing intent.

“Vice Principal Umino,” Kakashi’s voice is sharp as he approaches. Iruka blinks up at him. “My ANBU has reported a disturbance at the Academy”

“Oh,” brown eyes widen, “I suppose I should go check it out. I apologize, Hijiri-san,” Iruka says, looking genuinely regretful. Kakashi wants to punch something. “As much as I’ve enjoyed our conversation, I probably should go check”

Hijiri looks at Iruka, a little concerned.

“Will you be alright? I can send some of my guards with you, if you wish”

“ANBU are the most elite shinobi in the entire village,” Kakashi says, slipping into his Hound persona to keep from saying or doing something that would set off an incident, something he hasn’t had to do in years. Iruka widens his eyes briefly.

“Thank you, Hijiri-san, but Rokudaime-sama is right,” Iruka smiles warmly, “and I am also a shinobi trained to deal with threats to the village. Besides, it’s probably just a couple of students causing trouble. They regularly make attempts to break in either to steal exam questions or as a dare”

Hijiri’s eyes widen, “I apologize, I forgot you are also a shinobi. Forgive me, but I always expect shinobi to be more like that,” he points to Tenzo, “you’re so…nice”

Iruka’s chakra bristles slightly before Iruka forcibly settles it.

“Thank you, Hijiri-san,” Iruka smiles, getting to his feet. “I apologize

for rushing off like this, but-"

"I understand perfectly, Iruka-san," Hijiri gets to his feet as well, taking Iruka's hand and brushing a kiss to it before bowing. Iruka sends Kakashi a look that screams behave but Kakashi is firmly locked behind Hound and barely reacts. "Your dedication is admirable, and I am more than grateful that my son is under your care. Perhaps we can get together later and continue our discussion, I am here for two more days"

"Ah," Iruka looks regretful, "my days are pretty busy with the reviews I was mentioning. How about I let you know when I'm free?"

"Of course," Hijiri's voice is warm, "your dedication is admirable. If we do not get a chance to meet again in the next couple of days, perhaps I can come back independently of my cousin's entourage"

"Perhaps," Iruka smiles, "but really, I must go"

"Right, it was wonderful meeting you"

"Likewise, Hijiri-san"

Iruka follows Kakashi out of the hall.

"Oh thank the gods," Iruka exhales when they're on the rooftops, "even if it's just a brat student trying to steal exam answers, I'll give it to them I'm so grateful"

"You looked like you were having a good time," Kakashi can't keep the bitterness from his tone. "He's very handsome"

"He also hasn't the slightest idea about shinobi, and is so incredibly self-absorbed," Iruka shakes his head, "no wonder his wife left him! Not to mention the venue. Seriously, what are they thinking? It's a logistical nightmare, cramming that many people into one room, unsupervised food and drink, and don't even get me started about the windows! I felt the back of my neck prickling all night"

Kakashi feels relief creep into his bones and he falls a bit more in love at the fact Iruka can commiserate.

"So you're not about to run off and marry into the Daimyo's family?" Kakashi asks, trying to keep his voice light. Iruka stops and looks at him.

“Kakashi, what-are you, were you jealous?” the disbelief in Iruka’s tone snaps the last of Kakashi’s frayed nerves because of course he is.

“Wouldn’t you be, sensei?” he sneers, “his hands were all over you and you were smiling at him like he hung the stars!”

“I was not, I was being polite!” Iruka’s temper flares.

“That was a lot more than polite,” Kakashi grits out, “how could you not see he was flirting with you?”

“We were talking about my past students!”

“*Likewise Hijiri-san*,” Kakashi mimics, knowing that it’ll set Iruka off. He’s not sure why he wants to fight with Iruka, but he can’t burn off the image of Iruka’s pink cheeks as he brushes his hair behind his ear.

“You’re a real asshole Hatake,” Iruka snaps, “and apparently you don’t trust me enough to realize that even if he was flirting, it’s not like it would lead anywhere!”

Kakashi recoils back. It’s not that he didn’t trust Iruka, he did trust Iruka.

“You’re impossible! Was there even a disturbance or did you just say that?” Kakashi looks away. “Hatake Kakashi,” Iruka’s voice is deadly, “did you lie about an incident?”

“I,” Kakashi bites out, “it may have been ANBU”

“I cannot believe you!” Iruka yells, “do you not realize how immature this is? You used your ANBU to fake an issue to get away from the Daimyo and his court!? That’s incredibly disrespectful and if word of that ever got out…” Iruka scrubs his hand down his face, “I just. I can’t deal with you right now”

“Fine,” Kakashi snaps, “go back and flirt for all I care”

“You’re unbelievable, you know that?” Iruka looks at him, hurt evident in his brown eyes and Kakashi feels like an asshole as he leaves.

The ANBU land nearby.

“Senpai…”

“Don’t”

He switches track and makes his way towards the Hokage residence. The cold, emptiness of the place makes his skin crawl like the Daimyo's dinner and he knows he wants to be anywhere but here.

"Honestly, I don't blame him," he hears one of his ANBU murmur, "I was getting ready to fall asleep over there"

"Why did he drag Iruka-sensei out though?" he pinpoints that ANBU as one of Iruka's former students. Getting them to address Iruka as anything else when they're in uniform is an ongoing battle.

"Believability maybe?"

Kakashi leaves a clone before masking his chakra and slipping away.

He makes his way to the river bank and drops down heavily. He hears the soft susurrus of grass as someone lands lightly next to him.

"You really fucked up, senpai"

Tenzo's gotten bolder and less easily manipulated over the years. Something for which Kakashi is both grateful for and sometimes hates. Now he has three people in his life who don't take his shit at face value.

"I know," Kakashi huffs. "I just…" he flops into his back, "what is wrong with me Tenzo?"

"You love him"

"He thinks I don't trust him. That's not true. I do trust him, I just don't trust everyone else," he presses them heels of his palms to his eyes, hard enough to see stars, "I'm not good enough for him. I just…I keep waiting for the day he'll realize I'm not-" Kakashi doesn't finish his sentence because it feels too much like speaking it into existence.

"Have you told him this?"

"No"

"Gai says-"

"Tenzo, really, romantic advice from Gai?"

"Gai is very romantic!" Tenzo's voice holds a tone of affront, "he brings me flowers every day no matter what. If he's away on a mission, he'll have Lee or Tenten deliver them"

“Does he know you can grow your own?” Kakashi asks, amused.

“It doesn’t matter, senpai. It’s the fact he thinks of me. Sure I could grow my own, but they wouldn’t be special like they are when he gives them to me”

Kakashi huffs, closing his eyes.

“Gai always says that the key to a good relationship is honest communication”

“I’m sure his method of communication is shouting from the Hokage Monument”

“Senpai you’re being unnecessarily mean”

“I’m sorry,” Kakashi sits up, “really, Tenzo, I’m happy for you”

“You and Iruka-san aren’t good at being honest with each other,” Tenzo’s cat mask tilts to the side.

“I’m more honest with him than I am with anyone else”

“But you also try to hide things from him. How many times have you been honest with Iruka-san that hasn’t been him prodding until you talk?” Kakashi falls silent because he knows Tenzo is right. “If Iruka-san didn’t prod at you, would you talk to him?”

“I don’t know”

“You trust him, but you also don’t. I’m still learning that too, senpai. Learning that if something is bothering me, or I’m upset about something, I can talk to Gai about it and not have to worry that he’ll be mad or that he’ll think it’s stupid or weak,” Tenzo draws his knees up to his chest, resting his chin on them, “it’s not easy to learn to trust. Especially not for people like us. But it’s not impossible either”

“When did you get so wise, kohai?”

“When I started dating Gai,” Tenzo remarks, getting to his feet. “Go talk to Iruka-san. Actually talk. Don’t make him work for it”

“Fine, fine,” Kakashi waves him off, “maybe when he cools down”

“You know it’s better to talk to him sooner rather than later. Don’t avoid this, senpai. I think you’ll regret it”

“I already do,” Kakashi murmurs, staring at the water. Tenzo doesn’t respond, simply makes his way over to the tree. “You’d better not have green spandex at your wedding,” Kakashi calls.

“Only for you, senpai!”

“Cheeky little shit,” Kakashi huffs a laugh, “he’s not a cute kohai anymore. Gai, you’ve corrupted him”

He lays sprawled on the grass for a few minutes longer before making his way back to the Hokage Tower. Maybe he’ll do some paperwork instead of wallowing.

Or he’ll wallow in his paperwork.

A familiar silhouette approaches him on the sidewalk and Kakashi freezes.

“Iruka, I-”

“I’m sorry,” Iruka apologizes. Kakashi startles. “I overreacted”

“No, I overreacted,” Kakashi scrubs a hand through his hair, “it was just a perfect storm of things and-Iruka, can we go somewhere else?” Iruka nods and turns away.

Kakashi follows him to their apartment. The door shuts and silence falls over them.

“Kakashi, I-”

“Please listen,” Kakashi says, before Iruka can speak. Iruka blinks. “It’s not that I don’t trust you, I do. I just,” he exhales, be honest, “I just keep waiting for the day you realize you can do so much better than me. That I’m not, that I’m not good enough for you,” brown eyes widen, “Tenzo said we’re bad at being honest with each other. So, I’m trying. I do trust you, Iruka, I’m just scared. And then everything about tonight, I was just on edge and I shouldn’t have reacted the way I did”

Iruka’s expression softens and Kakashi holds his breath.

“I figured it was something like that,” he says, “really, Kakashi, you’re not as difficult to figure out as you think”

“I don’t know whether to be insulted by that or not,” Kakashi mumbles, but at least Iruka isn’t yelling or kicking him out.

“I’m not good at being honest either,” Iruka admits. Kakashi looks up. “I can’t even be honest with myself sometimes. It’s fucking terrifying, you know that? If anyone isn’t good enough here, it’s me”

“No-”

“Let me finish,” Iruka says firmly. Kakashi falls silent, but doesn’t like the thought that Iruka doesn’t think he’s good enough. “You’re the Rokudaime Hokage, one of the hero generals of the Fourth Shinobi War. Even before that, your reputation preceded you; Hatake Kakashi, son of the White Fang, master of a thousand jutsu, the only non-Uchiha to have and use a Sharingan, a child prodigy who became a chunin at six and a jonin at twelve and has been in the Bingo Books probably longer than I’ve been a shinobi. Everyone knows who you are and is either afraid of you or respects you, or both. I used to break up playground fights over who got to make believe as you”

“Really?” that surprises Kakashi.

“Really,” Iruka laughs, “I had one student actually punch another because he wanted to be you so badly. I’ve had kids who wander around wearing masks because they want to look like you. I even had to stop one boy from dumping a bucket of white paint over his head once,” Kakashi can’t help but laugh at the image, “my point is, you’re practically a legend. While almost all of the current students don’t even know I taught Naruto. It’s a little laughable, when you think about it”

“That’s what other people see,” Kakashi says, “people don’t get it. I may have the power, the reputation, but at what cost? I’m…broken. I don’t even know if there’s enough pieces left of me to even begin putting back together. I’d give it all up in a heartbeat if it meant all my sins, all my failures were undone. I’ve killed children, Iruka, entire families slaughtered because the order was to leave no one alive. *No one.* You forget the less flattering nicknames: Friend-Killer, Cold-Blooded. Even now I can’t understand why someone like you, someone who…I don’t even know where to begin with you, you’re that amazing to me. Someone like you deserves so much better than a broken, emotionally stunted killer like me and I’m scared of the day you realize that because…” he exhales shakily, “because I’m scared to lose you”

Iruka is silent for a long time before stocky brown fingers wrap around his own.

“Aren’t we a pair,” he looks up at the watery tone, eyes wide, “*anata*, do you know why it’s you?” Kakashi shakes his head, “because of who you are. Not the Copy Ninja, or Kakashi of the Sharingan, or the Rokudaime Hokage. But because you’re you. The you who gave Naruto a chance. The you who helped me to give Naruto a chance. Remember that conversation? All those years ago when I was questioning everything. You didn’t even know me, yet you sat down and offered to listen, offered advice. Back then, you were the only person to genuinely listen. Everyone else brushed me off or were quick to dismiss him because of their prejudices. And then after that, Naruto would come home complaining bitterly about his *stupid Kakashi-sensei*, but underneath the underneath it was obvious he respected you, that he looked up to you. And equally obvious how much you cared for him. I could name a million other things like how you care deeply for Gai and Yamato, your dedication to the village, the fact that you really do have a kind heart despite what you may think,” Iruka gently tugs his mask down before cradling his face with both hands, “but what I hold closest and dearest, is the fact that you were also able to see Naruto for who he is instead of what he is, long before anyone else. Hatake Kakashi, listen and listen well, okay? There is no better man than you. Not for me”

Kakashi kisses him. Trying to pour all his feelings, the ones he can’t find the words for, into the kiss.

“I don’t deserve you,” he whispers between kisses, “I don’t deserve this”

“It’s not about deserving, Kakashi,” Iruka responds, “it’s because you’ve earned it. I’m not going anywhere, so I’d like you to have a little more trust in me”

“I trust you,” Kakashi murmurs, pressing their foreheads together, “I just don’t trust myself”

“Then let me,” Iruka says, “trust me to trust you”

Kakashi nods, holding Iruka close.

“I’m sorry,” Kakashi murmurs, “I handled everything wrong”

“And I snapped back,” Iruka sighs, “I think we were both a little on edge”

Kakashi nods.

Iruka kisses him again.

“Let’s just shower and go to sleep. Pretend tonight never happened”

“Yes please,” Kakashi groans, “if I never experience another event like that ever again, it will still be too soon”

Iruka shudders. “It was pretty bad. Who the hell did the organizing? I would assume a civilian”

“Someone from the Daimyo’s court and one of the council assistants”

“Fire them,” Iruka says bluntly and Kakashi laughs. Iruka’s answering smile is soft and Kakashi is so grateful that he’s found someone so patient with his general fucked-upness and inability to be a human.

He’s laying in bed, watching Iruka sleep as his conversation with Tenzo dances through his head and he sighs, nestling closer to Iruka.

He knows Iruka isn’t completely honest with him about his feelings either, he locks far too many things away behind smiles and distracting kisses, and Kakashi wonders if that’s because he’s not honest himself.

Maybe he should try harder.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“A prisoner is requesting compassionate release”

The words echo in Kakashi’s brain as he looks at the file that’s been haunting him for two days.

Toji Mizuki

He flips it open and stares at the ninja registration photo of a man with cold green eyes and shoulder-length pale blue hair.

He had read through the incident involving the scroll. He knows the gist of it: Iruka got the scar on his back protecting Naruto from another teacher who had convinced him to steal the scroll, Toji Mizuki. Naruto proceeded to beat him to a bloody pulp.

He is also peripherally aware of the fact Iruka and Mizuki were, in some capacity, together romantically. He doesn’t like to dwell on that thought though and he certainly hasn’t asked about details.

Except this second one, the prison break, he hadn’t been aware of that one. He had been on back to back A-ranks at the time, but he remembers lending Pakkun to Iruka.

It had still been in the early months of their friends with benefits relationship. When he had finally had some time to spend with Iruka, the younger man had been distracted and had had some of the worst nightmares Kakashi had ever encountered from him. But he hadn’t said anything and Kakashi hadn’t felt like he could ask.

Chunin Umino Iruka and genin Uzumaki Naruto tracked traitor chunin Toji Mizuki. Umino Iruka faced Toji Mizuki which resulted in the destruction of the Academy Instructor Exam Facility. Chunin Toji consumed an experimental drug created by the Sannin Orochimaru (see page 3). Chunin Umino and Genin Uzumaki engaged Chunin Toji. Genin Uzumaki defeated Chunin Toji and the serum stripped him of any ability to perform ninjutsu and degraded the cells in his body. Sannin Senju Tsunade stabilized him. Chunin Toji was interrogated for information on Orochimaru’s whereabouts snd returned to Konoha High Security Prison.

He flips to the appeal for release. Signed by not only the warden, but several guards.

Prisoner: *Toji Mizuki*

Reason: *slow cellular degradation due to foreign substance. Six months left to live. Toji Mizuki has been an exemplary prisoner thus we request he be released to spend the remaining time of his life in the comfort of Konoha.*

He remembers the day he first opened it. He had been so angry that his rage had drawn several ANBU.

He had pushed it aside, doing every other piece of paperwork first.

Shizune pushes open the doors, holding a list.

“So, today you don’t have any meetings, but there are some urgent requests from the Daimyo…”

Kakashi hands her the completed paperwork he had been doing to avoid the prisoner release request. Shizune exhales in relief.

“Kakashi-sama, about the prisoner release request…”

“I’m going on a walk”

“Kakashi-sama!”

Kakashi lets the door shut and flickers out the window. He slides his hands into his pockets as he stares at the sky. The request came from the warden himself. That rarely happens.

And yet…

More than one night he’s been woken up by one of Iruka’s nightmares. They’re relatively rare, but more than once he’s heard the name ‘Mizuki’ from Iruka’s lips.

He tries to think about what he would do if he weren’t emotionally invested.

Regardless of what happened with Iruka, the man is a traitor. Possibly a danger to the village. He can no longer perform ninjutsu, but he can manipulate others like he did with Naruto.

And with Orochimaru also loose in the village…

But the request, while being rare itself, comes from the prison warden directly.

Kakashi wanders through the village until the sun begins to set. He ends up passing by Ichiraku's and his gaze is drawn to a familiar back.

Iruka is sitting next to a boy with a dusty pink bandana around his spiky hair and a hitai-ate dangling around his neck.

Kakashi recognizes him as Iruka's worst troublemaker from the previous year. The kid who stole the fake Book of Seals and probably gave Iruka more than a few grey hairs that year.

Book of Seals. Naruto. Mizuki.

He really does not want to deal with this right now.

The boy is making aggressive gestures with his hands. Iruka rests a hand on his spiky hair. The boy seems to settle down, dissolving into a pouting expression that has Iruka hiding his smile.

Kakashi decides he needs to be near Iruka, so he pushes back the flap.

"Welcome!" Teuchi and Ayame call.

"Rokudaime-sama," the boy stares at Kakashi with eyes the size of saucer plates. "You eat ramen?"

Iruka hides his smile behind his hand, turning his focus back to his bowl.

"Of course," Kakashi grins, even though he knows the kid can't see it, "Ichiraku's ramen is the best, isn't it, Iruka-sensei?"

"Yes," he can tell Iruka is struggling between the urge to laugh or glare, "it is, Kakashi-sama," he emphasizes the *sama*.

"I've told you, drop the sama," Kakashi knows he's pushing the boundary of acceptability for their public interactions but he needs to be closer to Iruka than just Rokudaime and villager. "We're close, aren't we sensei?"

Iruka exhales and pinches the bridge of his nose but sends him that questioning look that tells Kakashi that Iruka knows his behavior is odd.

"Iruka-sensei," the boy looks up at him with a new level of

heroworship, “are you really friends with the Rokudaime?”

“You could say that,” Iruka glares at Kakashi who grins, crinkling his eyes particularly hard.

“Wow,” the boy murmurs, “maybe you don’t suck as much as I thought”

Kakashi tries not to choke on his ramen. Iruka, for his part, looks more amused than anything at this point.

“Thank you for that assessment, Tsukune,” Iruka responds, “are you finished? We don’t want to worry your grandma by having you back too late”

“Granny doesn’t even know what time I get home,” Tsukune huffs, “I don’t even think she knows I even live there”

Iruka’s expression softens into a gentle, paternal sympathy but he carefully doesn’t let the kid see it.

“Then maybe we can stop for dango on the way”

“Really, Iruka-sensei?” Tsukune stares up at him before seeming to catch himself. He crosses his arms. “I-I mean, if you want to get dango, fine, we can…we can go”

Kakashi watches the pair bicker as they leave.

“Bye Teuchi, Ayame!” Iruka waves, “bye Kakashi-sama”

Kakashi winces. He’s probably going to get an earful when he goes home tonight. If he does. He’s torn between wanting to be close to Iruka and wanting to distance himself to help his objectivity.

“Sleeping on the couch tonight, Kakashi-san?” Teuchi chortles. The man makes regular jokes about how Kakashi and Iruka are like Naruto’s dads but Kakashi suspects Teuchi actually knows about them. There’s nothing that goes on in the village that the man doesn’t seem to know, but he keeps his secrets better than any ANBU trained shinobi.

“Maa,” Kakashi scratches the back of his head, spinning his chopsticks, “where’s the fun if I can’t push his buttons?”

“Every year,” Teuchi shakes his head, “every year, Iruka-sensei is in here with a new problem child or two. He’s never had anyone as bad

as Naruto, but he's had a few. This one has an attitude problem and he failed his jonin instructor's exam for being unruly and taking an attitude. But by the time Iruka-sensei is done with him, the kid will probably go on to become a fine shinobi"

"I'm not surprised," Kakashi grins, setting his chopsticks down. "He can even get me to behave"

Teuchi chortles again. Ayame grins.

"Maa, better go make up with the wife then," Kakashi drawls out before wincing, "but don't tell him I called him that. He'll probably come up with some terribly creative punishment like self-replicating paperwork or something"

"Good luck," Teuchi waves.

Kakashi wanders the streets of Konoha for a bit. He wonders if he should just tell Iruka the truth. Maybe Iruka would be able to help him sort out his thoughts. Even when he's not giving him advice, sometimes just talking to Iruka helps clear the cobwebs from his grey matter.

Eventually he wanders back to the apartment he's pretty much moved himself into without telling Iruka he was moving in and stretches out on the couch, pulling out the romance book that he's been covering with an Icha Icha dust jacket.

He's not sure how long he's been reading when the door opens and Iruka enters.

"Welcome home," he says lazily.

Iruka raises an eyebrow as he tugs off his vest.

"Anata," his voice is equal parts irritated, chastising, and fond which means Kakashi isn't in trouble.

"What a cute gremlin," Kakashi chuckles, hands in his pockets as he gets to his feet. "I don't know how you do it"

"I had to spend ten minutes answering questions about you," Iruka accuses.

"Oh?" Kakashi backs him against the wall by the door, trapping him with his arms on either side of his head, "and what exactly did you

tell your impressionable student?"

"That you were lazy," Iruka drapes his arm over Kakashi's neck and Kakashi finds his heart settling at the closeness, "bad at paperwork, spent far too much time reading that perverted book and finding new and increasingly creative ways to drive me insane"

Kakashi laughs.

"Well, you are drawn to the problem children"

"Are you a problem child, Rokudaime?" Iruka quirks an eyebrow.

"The biggest," Kakashi responds, pressing their foreheads together, "I may need you to discipline me"

"You're impossible," Iruka exhales, kissing him. "Now scoot. Don't think I don't know you're hiding from Shizune"

"But-"

"No buts," Iruka responds, ducking out from under his arm, "especially not mine. Not until you've done whatever Shizune was complaining about by the Mission Desk earlier"

Kakashi sighs and trails after Iruka as he sets his papers on his desk. He wraps his arms around Iruka's waist, burying his face in his shoulder.

"I mean it, Kakashi," Iruka says, pinning him with a stern stare, "you cannot be skipping out on your work"

"It's a problem I really don't know how to deal with right now," Kakashi says, knowing that when Iruka is serious like this he has to be honest and won't get away with teasing and half-truths. "I've been thinking about it all day and needed a change of pace from the office"

Iruka sighs and tugs a tuft of silvery hair.

"Fine, you can think here. But I need to concentrate on my own work. I have an investigation I have to write up for the board"

"Investigation?" Kakashi asks, suddenly interested. He circles around to sit on Iruka's desk, thigh pressed against Iruka's.

Iruka shakes his head. "It's a long story"

“Maa, sensei, I’m all ears,” maybe listening to another problem will help him sort out his own.

“One of the instructors is being brought up on sexual harassment charges against a student from this year’s graduating class”

“Oh? Those are serious charges”

“Except the accusations didn’t start until after he failed her. Her friends and classmates had no idea that anything was happening and her best friend was honestly shocked because apparently they tell each other everything. We’ve never had any issues with this particular instructor before, either”

“Hm,” Kakashi rests his chin in his hand. “So it’s possible it’s in retaliation for failing her?”

“Possibly. But the accusations are still too serious to dismiss out of hand”

“So how are you handling the investigation?”

“Well, I finished the initial interviews up, but it didn’t help much. Either she’s a very good liar, or it really did happen, but the external indicators point towards the former. I’m thinking of getting someone from T&I involved”

“Oh? Do you have a name in mind?”

“Yamanaka Santa. His twins are also in her class. One passed the exam and one didn’t”

“So you would pass the other?”

“I’m not sure,” Iruka sighs, “and I know Santa-san wouldn’t dare ask, he’s too polite for that. He would do it regardless. But it seems unfair to ask without reciprocation. And the reason the one twin failed is because she was late to the exam, it had nothing to do with her abilities…” Iruka brushes a hand across his forehead. “The instructor has agreed to cooperate fully, so it would be a fairly simple matter… but I need to get the board’s approval before I go getting someone else involved like that”

“Is this why you’ve been at the school so late every night?” Kakashi has recently taken to bringing his paperwork to Iruka’s office after sending Shizune home and they’ll work in silence until late into the

night before heading home. He's actually more productive like that since he's not constantly being interrupted and he gets to be with Iruka.

"I mean, there's other things I have to do, but yes," Iruka sits in his chair and Kakashi slides off the desk to wrap his arms around Iruka's neck from behind. He tugs the bouncy ponytail loose and nuzzles the soft hair.

"You're awfully clingy tonight," Iruka says, mildly annoyed but making no move to pull away.

"Hm," Kakashi only holds tighter. "Looks like we both have things to think on, sensei"

"Is it something you can talk about?"

"Something I don't want to talk about," Kakashi corrects.

"It bothers you?" Iruka reaches up to thread his fingers through his hair and Kakashi sighs, pressing into the touch.

"Sensei, let me ask you…if there was someone who betrayed you, betrayed the village, and was imprisoned, but the warden requested them to be released, what would you do?"

Iruka exhales slowly and Kakashi can see him carefully weighing his words.

"What is the basis for release?"

"Compassionate," Kakashi frowns, "end of life"

"Oh…" Iruka breathes. "Well," Iruka slowly spins one of his pens, "is there a risk of them betraying the village again?"

"Probably not"

"Compassionate release like that comes with stipulations, does it not?"

"And an ANBU guard," Kakashi confirms, "like Orochimaru"

"How long?"

"Hm?"

"Do you know how long they have left to live?" Iruka asks carefully.

“Six months”

Another exhale.

“I would say grant it”

“Really?” Kakashi asks. “Even if this person betrayed you? Hurt you? Hurt someone you cared about? Betrayed the village?”

“Did they?” Iruka asks quietly. Kakashi realizes he’s been caught and tightens his grip around Iruka. His silence seems to answer the question because Iruka sighs quietly and stands, taking Kakashi’s hand in his and guiding him down the hall to the bedroom.

Iruka opens the bottom drawer of his dresser and pulls out the blankets stored there. Placing his hand in the center, a seal lights up. Iruka releases the seal and Kakashi looks at a battered, dark blue photo album.

“Here, sit with me,” Iruka sits on the bed and Kakashi follows. He watches as Iruka flips open the album. There’s a few pictures that are charred around the edges of a man and a woman and a toddler Iruka.

“You were so cute,” Kakashi grins, brushing a fingertip over the chubby, unscarred cheeks. “It’s weird seeing you without it”

“I got it when I was five,” Iruka says, “I was being an idiot with, well, Mizuki,” Kakashi holds his breath, “he was a couple years older than me and we were neighbors. I idolized him and he thought I was the most annoying thing ever. One day he decided to try and shoot an apple off my head with a shuriken and I agreed”

“Iruka…”

“I actually don’t remember much about that day,” Iruka laughs, “I just remember our parents were furious and to make matters worse, I wouldn’t behave and let it heal which is why it scarred over as badly as it did. I think it got infected twice”

Iruka turns the page and rests his fingertips against a photo.

The photo is of a young Iruka, maybe about eight with a grin so reminiscent of Naruto it makes Kakashi smile. The scar is prominent and has the look of a newer injury. He has his arms thrown around a sleepy-looking boy with dark green eyes and a bandana over pale blue hair.

Mizuki.

“He lost his mother that night,” Iruka says, “his father was a jonin who died before he was born. We were both orphaned. We stayed together in what was left of my house. Mizuki, he, well he pretty much took care of me. I was useless. I was angry and depressed. Mizuki had some cooking skills, but we couldn’t afford anything so we ended up eating plain mazegohan pretty much every day since it was cheap and easy to keep”

Kakashi turns the page of the album, curious to find out more about the side of himself that the younger man usually keeps close to his chest.

There are a lot of Mizuki in the beginning. Then Anko featured in most of them. Kotetsu and Izumo joined later, along with Asuma and the Sandaime. Kakashi laughs at a photo of an angry looking, paint-covered Ibiki with his fist mashed on the top of Iruka’s head while Iruka is laughing.

He smiles as a photo of a young Anko sitting in Iruka’s lap, grinning at the camera while Kotetsu sneaks up behind them. Another photo of a pouting Iruka and a grinning Asuma with his hand pressed against the top of Iruka’s head. The breath is pulled out of his lungs at a picture of an older teenage Iruka with his hair falling to just above his butt, a group of kids behind him braiding flowers into it. The expression on his face is so serene and soft.

He wants so desperately to steal that photo and keep it close.

“We grew up together,” Iruka points to a photo of an older Iruka, teenager with a ponytail falling to his shoulders, leaning against a teenage Mizuki’s chest and flashing a peace sign at the camera. Mizuki looks annoyed. “Mizuki would always look out for me and I relied on him. Probably more than was healthy. Especially once it seemed like he was…I don’t know. Nobody liked him. Anko and Kotetsu and Izumo were always telling me not to trust him, that he was no good to me. Ibiki even once threatened him. But I didn’t listen”

“Were you…?” Kakashi isn’t even sure he wants to know for sure.

“For about two years,” Iruka confirms Kakashi’s worst fear. “I found out the year before the scroll incident that he had actually been cheating on me with someone else from our friend group. A girl named Tsubaki. She didn’t know about me and Mizuki because we kept it quiet. They were engaged”

“Iruka, I-” Kakashi feels sick.

“I forgave him,” Iruka laughs, almost bitterly. “And she never found out. It wasn’t a very good relationship anyways. The reason Ibiki threatened him was because he put my face through a window during a fight. Apparently he figured because we were both men, it didn’t matter”

Kakashi genuinely feels like he’s going to throw up. He doesn’t even realize electricity is crackling around his hands until Iruka curls his own around Kakashi’s wrists. He threads their fingers together and rests his chin on Kakashi’s shoulder.

“He hadn’t always been like that though. He changed after the mission where…” Iruka sighs, “he killed a comrade who was non-fatally injured just so he wouldn’t be slowed down. That was when Orochimaru approached him. I knew he had changed, he got more aggressive and short-tempered, but I just assumed it was because he was under stress from the investigation so I tried my best to support him”

“You’re too good,” Kakashi murmurs, head bowed. “The scroll incident, what were you?”

“We weren’t…exactly friends, but we were cordial. Closer than acquaintances. Although I admit I probably still harbored some feelings, some hope that maybe he would change. That he would be the Mizuki I remembered from childhood,” Iruka sighs and squeezes Kakashi’s hands. “All of that disappeared during the fight after he escaped prison. He said he was only using our relationship for the attention it gave him, that he enjoyed seeing me miserable and looking down on me. That I was naive and foolish for believing in things like comrades and the Will of Fire…” Iruka reaches for the photo album, setting it in Kakashi’s lap and flipping through it to the most recent set of photos and Kakashi’s heart finds a new home in his throat.

There’s nearly three pages of photos with Kakashi. Some are photos that Kakashi himself took. Some are with Kakashi dressed as Sukea.

He stares at one of him sleeping. Except his face is covered completely in foam and Iruka is crouched next to him, holding up a peace sign and grinning.

“Iruka…”

“It’s not common for a compassionate release request to come through is it?” Iruka says quietly.

“No, not at all,” Kakashi says, still staring at the photo album. He slowly flips through the pages, realizing just how many photos of Naruto are in there. He smiles at a photo of Iruka and Naruto both covered in paint and wearing matching grins, another of them wearing matching orange ramen patterned pajama pants and Anko wearing scandalously short orange shorts and a too-large ramen patterned pajama shirt that matched Iruka’s pants, “and not one personally signed by the warden”

“You’re conflicted because of me?”

“I tried to think about it objectively”

“And?”

“It didn’t help. There’s still too many variables. Orochimaru is also in the village…if Mizuki and him-”

“Orochimaru was never interested in Mizuki,” Iruka shakes his head, “Mizuki was only ever a failed experiment to him, a guinea pig. Especially now that Mizuki is no longer able to perform ninjutsu”

“True,” Kakashi frowns, “but Mizuki could manipulate someone else like he did with Naruto”

“You don’t think his ANBU guard would be able to prevent that?” Iruka asks, “I went to visit him once, you know”

“Really?” Kakashi doesn’t think he wants to hear this but he also has the clawing, gripping need to know what happened.

“A couple times, actually,” Iruka scratches at his scar, “but I was never able to work up the courage to actually make it past the gates. But one of those times I ran into Tsubaki. She’s happily married to someone else now and I suppose she visited him to find some kind of closure. She said he was more like the Mizuki she remembered, that losing his ability to be a ninja took away most of his anger”

“So you really think I should grant it?”

“Six months,” Iruka shifts, closing the photo album and splaying his fingers against the battered cover. Kakashi wants to look at it longer. “It would be a kindness that he doesn’t deserve, but,” Iruka sighs,

“he’s still human after all, and perhaps this olive branch will abate any lingering hatred or anger in his heart”

“Iruka,” Kakashi murmurs, slightly awed and incredibly humbled by Iruka’s compassion. “You’re amazing”

“Any anger I held towards him has faded over the years and now more than anything I pity him,” Iruka laughs softly, “especially when I think I could easily have become like him. But I had the Sandaime, Asuma, Anko, I was able to let go of my hatred and anger towards the fox because of Naruto…because of you”

“You would have done it even without me,” Kakashi says.

“But would it have been too late”

“Then, this time it will be me taking your advice,” Kakashi murmurs, “I will grant the release”

Iruka gently cups his cheeks and softly kisses him. Kakashi returns the kiss, pressing Iruka back onto the bed.

“But…I don’t want him coming near you,” Kakashi adds when he pulls away. Iruka’s expression is soft and oh so very fond. “Or Naruto”

“Can you add Tsubaki to that list?” Iruka asks quietly, hand curled in the fabric of Kakashi’s shirt, “I doubt he would do anything, and her husband is a jonin, but it would make me feel better”

“Of course,” Kakashi says quickly. Iruka’s answering smile is more than worth it.

Kakashi is as drained from the conversation as he would be after using the Sharingan for twelve hours straight. He’s not even entirely sure why.

“Anata,” Iruka says, “relax, your entire body is tense”

Kakashi exhales and realizes Iruka is right. Every single muscle in Kakashi’s body is taut, as if preparing for a fight. He exhales and focuses on relaxing his body, one part at a time.

“It’s late,” Iruka sighs and shakes his head, “I suppose Shizune can wait until tomorrow. We can’t have our Rokudaime falling ill due to lack of sleep”

“So caring, sensei,” Kakashi grins, but he knows he’s too tired to go

back to Hokage Tower and deal with paperwork.

“Go shower,” Iruka lightly flicks his forehead before standing. “I do have paperwork to finish”

“Not gonna join me, sensei?” Kakashi leers, wrapping his arms around his waist from his position on the bed.

“Do you need a babysitter?” Iruka raises an eyebrow. Kakashi nuzzles at his crotch and Iruka exhales sharply. “Kakashi…as much as I want to, I really need to finish this report”

Kakashi sighs and lets go.

“Maa sensei, work and no play,” he pouts.

“If it’s not too late, maybe I’ll play with you after,” Iruka responds.

Kakashi watches him leave with a soft smile. He’s so stupidly in love with the man and his kindness.

But that solves the problem plaguing him. He’s also not surprised by Iruka’s answer. It’s very much Iruka.

He put my face through a window

Kakashi wants to scrub that from his mind. He’s still angry, but it’s no longer the raging, burning fury that made him want to go to the prison to slowly and painfully kill the man himself.

The warm water helps ease some of the tension in his body and he uses Iruka’s soap instead of his own. His soap, like all the rest of his body products, has no scent whatsoever. Unique in the fact that it has no scent and works to mask his own. More than once has he been able to find his enemy by the smell of their hair or their skin.

Iruka’s soap is not overwhelmingly scented, just a faint hint of lemongrass. Most people, aside from maybe Inuzukas, wouldn’t be able to smell it except at intimately close distances. But it does linger in his hair. Now that Kakashi is pretty much permanently village-bound and no longer needing to hide from anything more dangerous than Shizune and the occasional ANBU guard, he can afford to relax a little. And sometimes, usually when he’s had a rough day, he likes to use Iruka’s soap because it’s comforting and familiar.

He’s sure a couple of the Inuzukas have given him curious and

assessing glances at some point though.

Kiba even once casually mentioned that Kakashi smelled familiar but he couldn't remember from where.

He steps out of the shower feeling a lot calmer than when he went in and throws on a t-shirt and loose pair of sweatpants. He finds the photo album sitting on the bed and he picks it up. The fact Iruka didn't seal it back up meant that Kakashi had free reign to do whatever he wanted with it.

Iruka is working on his couch instead of his desk when Kakashi emerges. Kakashi pads over and practically slithers over the back of it.

"Anata, why can you not do things normally?" Iruka eyes him as he wiggles his way to rest his head in Iruka's lap.

"No fun"

Iruka's hand settles in his damp hair as he reads through his papers. Kakashi peruses the photo album, asking questions that Iruka easily answers.

"I didn't know you were close with Inoichi," Kakashi says, glancing at a photo of Iruka perched on a wall and holding a flower pot. Inoichi is looking fondly amused as he ruffles Iruka's hair.

"I wouldn't say close," Iruka responds, "I think he found me entertaining and I had a bit of a crush"

"Iruka-sensei is into older men?" Kakashi teases.

Iruka lightly flicks his nose, but he blushes. "Quiet"

"How did you even meet Ibiki?" Kakashi asks, glancing at a picture of Ibiki with splotches of blue staining his skin, Iruka thrown over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

Iruka snorts at that.

"Well, my jonin instructor and his jonin instructor were close," Iruka reaches over to flip to a page. Kakashi recognizes Iruka, Kotetsu and Izumo. A grizzled looking man is grinning at them from above their heads. "I terrorized his genin team. I was always a lot younger than everyone else, Ko and Zu are two years older than me. Everyone thought that meant I had the skill to back it up, but I'm pretty sure it

was only because they graduated me from the Academy just so that they wouldn't have to deal with me anymore. I wasn't ready to graduate, that's for sure. I struggled a lot. I was good at the basics, but everyone else was so much more advanced. It's part of why I didn't make chunin until sixteen. My jonin instructor was a weapons master. Ko and Zu thrived but…" Iruka scratches at his scar ruefully as he trails off, "well, they assigned me to him in the hopes that he would be able to control me. But I ended up frustrated more often than not and the more frustrated I got the worse I did and the more I resorted to pulling pranks. Ibiki was the easiest. For someone who is so creative with torture methods, he's surprisingly easy to trick. He even fell for the same prank twice. Tokara was a little bit better. He had a younger brother who was apparently a lot like me so he was used to that shit. And Hayate was always so nice to me so I usually left him alone. He'd try and help me but his teaching skills weren't the greatest"

"Hayate and Ibiki were on the same team, right?" Kakashi asks, feeling a flicker of sympathy for Iruka. He had heard about troublemakers being fast-tracked to graduation. Usually they washed out and either got killed on a mission or were forced to stop being shinobi entirely. He wonders if this is why Iruka's self-esteem is so low.

"Mhm. Eventually Ko and Zu became chunin and my jonin instructor didn't know how to handle me, so I got foisted off onto another genin team when I was fourteen," he flips the page to a picture of a bored looking woman, a teenage Iruka, a girl with blonde hair and a boy with vibrant purple eyes. "Then our instructor got severely injured and we kinda fell through the cracks. Without a jonin instructor, all we could do was take a bunch of D-ranks inside the village which didn't help us much with our skills, especially since we didn't have a jonin instructor. Suika and Kosuke were new genin. Actually, that's when I realized I had a knack for teaching. I did my best to try and help them but it was frustrating," Iruka laughs, "I kind of became the team captain. We didn't have anyone to nominate us for the Chunin Exams either. It wasn't until I turned sixteen that people realized something was wrong because I was still a genin despite my entire graduating class, and half of my teammates' class, having made it to chunin. It was actually Ibiki who caught it"

"Really?" Kakashi tilts his head. This is the most he's ever heard Iruka talk about his past and he's loathe to interrupt but that caught him by surprise.

“Yeah, shortly after I covered his entire office in tinfoil he tracked me down and demanded to know why I still had so much time on my hands and shouldn’t I be a chunin by now and taking missions outside the village and away from him,” Kakashi snorts, “Inoichi-san was a jonin by then and he offered to test us to see if he could put us through the Chunin Exams. We were able to get past Inoichi’s test and he nominated us that year. I passed, Suika and Kosuke didn’t. But I was a chunin which meant I could lead them in actual missions”

Iruka sighs and shakes his head. “They passed the following year”

“Where are they now?”

“Ah,” Iruka scratches at his scar, gaze going distant. “Dead”

Kakashi studies his face. Again, there’s more to this story, but Kakashi is already happy with how much he’s learned about Iruka’s past. He doesn’t want to go digging into sad memories right now. He brings his hand up to trace lightly across his scar.

Iruka smiles down at him, catching his hand and kissing his palm.

Kakashi closes his eyes and drifts in the half-asleep, half-awake doze he got used to on missions as Iruka combs through his hair.

“Iruka”

“Hm?”

“I don’t know what I would do without you,” he says quietly. The words aren’t exactly what he wants to say, but they’re close enough.

The hand stills briefly and a pair of warm lips press against his forehead.

“You’d figure it out,” he murmurs, “you always do. But for what it’s worth, I don’t think I’d be this happy without you”

Kakashi doesn’t think he’s ever been happier either. Even the prospect of having to sign his approval for the release of a man he hates solely because of how he treated the man he loves isn’t enough to take away his happiness.

Chapter End Notes

> this chapter actually inspired my other work reaching out for a hand 💀

this fic is honestly 99% fluff. Geez.

Chapter 9

“Ka-” Kakashi shakes his head and Iruka sighs. “Sukea-san, what are you doing here?”

“I was hoping I could convince you to go to dinner with me,” Kakashi as Sukea smiles, kissing Iruka’s cheek.

Iruka looks at his watch and tilts his head. “I have a Mission Desk shift at four”

“Maa, sensei, are you taking another overnight shift?”

“Just until eight this time,” Iruka sighs. “Why?”

“You need to find time to rest, sensei,” Kakashi frowns. “Let me walk you to the Mission Desk”

“That works,” Iruka smiles up at him.

“It’s really a lot easier to wear contacts this way,” Kakashi sighs, staring at a passing bird, “I remember it used to irritate the Sharingan so much”

“You didn’t go out as Sukea that often back then, did you?”

“Nope. Just a couple times. I told you about how Gai nearly gave me a heart attack, right?” Kakashi laughs. Iruka shakes his head.

“I wouldn’t be surprised if Gai did recognize you. I’m surprised he hasn’t even seen your face”

“Mm, nope! Just you and Tenzo. Though I’ve been thinking I might let Gai see…he is one of my precious people. But don’t tell him I said that”

“Of course not,” Iruka teases, “can’t have anyone thinking the great Hatake Kakashi has gone soft now, can we?”

“It would totally ruin my cool image,” Kakashi grins.

“*Anata*, I think you lost that a long time ago for anyone who knows you”

“No,” Kakashi shakes his head, “only you. And maybe Naruto and

Sakura. And Tenzo, but I won't tell him that either. Gai, for some reason, seems to still think I'm Cool and Hip," Kakashi flashes a thumbs up and Iruka chokes out a laugh.

"You're impossible," he sighs, shaking his head.

"Sukea-niichan? Iruka-sensei!?" Kakashi turns at the squawk to see Naruto standing a few feet away. "I didn't know you knew each other!"

"We met last time I was in town," Kakashi waves and rests a hand on Iruka's back. "It's good to catch up with people! Say, Naruto-kun, have you been successful in seeing Kakashi-san's face yet?"

Naruto huffs. "No!"

Iruka does an incredible job of keeping a straight face.

Kakashi had told Iruka about the kids' increasingly elaborate attempts at unmasking him, and how Sukea tried to help them.

He doesn't think Iruka's ever laughed that hard in front of him before, the younger man had actually snorted when Kakashi told him about Ino and the frog, and he had recorded it with the Sharingan because it was so unbelievably adorable.

"Naruto! Have you dragged Sukea-san into your nonsense?"

"I didn't! 'tebayo!" Naruto stomps his foot, "Sukea-niichan offered to help!"

"Sukea-san," Iruka turns a disapproving look on him. Kakashi grins.

"Sorry, Iruka-san, but it was quite a bit of fun getting to know Naruto and his friends"

"I see," Iruka raises an eyebrow at Kakashi. "They are an interesting bunch"

"I heard you got married, Naruto," Kakashi grins, "congratulations! Too bad I was busy chasing a story in the Land of Iron otherwise I would have congratulated you sooner"

"Ah, it's no big deal," Naruto rubs the back of his neck, "how long are you in Konoha for, Sukea-niichan?"

"Oh, I'm actually heading out a bit later today," Kakashi says, "but

you'll be my first stop next time I'm in Konoha"

"Looking forward to it, dattebayo!" Naruto grins, "gotta go though, Hinata is waiting for me"

"Don't keep her waiting then," Iruka chides, shooing him off. Naruto darts past them with a quick hug for Iruka.

"You're never going to let them see your face for real, are you?" Iruka asks, watching him disappear.

"Maybe one day when they're older"

"*Anata…*"

Kakashi kisses his cheek. Iruka sighs. He glances around before gripping the scarf and tugging Kakashi down to kiss him properly.

"This way! This way!"

Iruka pulls back seconds before a group of three kids run around the corner.

"Hi Vice Principal Iruka!" they chorus, "hi Vice Principal Iruka's friend!"

"Eiji! I think they went that way!" a little brunet boy points.

"Vice Principal Iruka, is he your boyfriend?" a blonde girl blinks up at them, "my brother has a boyfriend now"

"Ah," Iruka blushes red. Kakashi grins.

"Hanako! Hurry up!" a violet-haired boy tugs her arm, "we're gonna lose them!"

"Right!" Hanako chirps, "bye Vice Principal Iruka! Bye Vice Principal Iruka's maybe boyfriend!"

The three children run off.

"Hanako will forget about this anyway," Iruka laughs. "Otherwise I'll have a horde of pre-genin asking about my boyfriend"

"Am I?"

"Hm?"

“Am I Vice Principal Iruka’s boyfriend?” Kakashi winks. Iruka flushes.

“Boyfriend…sounds so juvenile,” Iruka scratches at his scar, “maybe it’s because I’ve heard enough cooing about boyfriends from pre-genin”

“So what would you use?” Kakashi is genuinely curious. Iruka’s non-answer was very much a non-answer and Kakashi has a theory.

“Ah,” Iruka’s blush is a deep burgundy and he won’t look Kakashi in the face. “Um, well, partner would probably be more appropriate for our age…” something in the way he says it confirms Kakashi’s theory.

Kakashi tilts his chin up. “Iruka,” he says seriously, “you can’t possibly be doubting what we are, how I feel about you”

Iruka’s answering silence causes Kakashi to sigh.

“How long has it been?”

“Hm?”

“Shall I draw out a timeline of our relationship starting from the first time I pinned you to the wall and fucked you until you couldn’t walk till now?”

“Kakashi-san!” Iruka covers his mouth, looking mortified. “You can’t say those things in public!”

“Iruka,” Kakashi grips his wrist, pulling his hand away, “I read porn in public. My point is,” Kakashi sighs, “my point is that I love you”

Brown eyes widen to the size of saucers.

“Kakashi-san, be serious-”

“You think I’m not?” Kakashi is genuinely getting frustrated, “Iruka, we’re going to start easy. How many people do you think I let see my face? Before you the only person who saw my face was Tenzo. Not even any of my past partners did,” he squeezes Iruka’s wrist, “how many people do you think I’ve let scold me the way you do? Or tease me the way you do? Do you not realize I’ve pretty much completely moved into your apartment? How many times in my entire life do you think I’ve said the words I love you to someone?”

“I…I don’t know…”

“I don’t either,” Kakashi says, “because even in my earliest memories, I can’t even remember saying it to my own father. So as far as I know, the first and only time I’ve ever told someone I love you, was less than five minutes ago. To you. Why are you still questioning this?”

“I don’t know,” Iruka bows his head. “It’s just hard to believe anyone-”

“Anyone could love you?” Kakashi asks quietly. Iruka bites his lip. “Iruka…who convinced you that you were unlovable?”

“I don’t, I don’t think that,” Iruka says, weakly.

“You always diminish yourself in the eyes of everyone else,” he pulls him into a hug, “you didn’t realize that Naruto saw you as his family too, that in all but blood you are Anko’s brother, and Asuma’s. He used to complain about you all the time in that fond tone that older siblings always seem to use. You don’t realize how important you are to me”

“Kakashi-san…”

“Umino Iruka,” Kakashi grips his face in both hands, forcing him to meet his eyes, “listen to me,” he holds his wide-eyed gaze, “I love you”

Iruka blinks before relief flashes across his features and his eyes fill with tears.

“I love you too,” he says in one long exhale, “so much it scares me. I was so afraid you didn’t feel the same”

Kakashi hugs him tightly with a tired laugh. “Iruka, I’m not like this with anyone else. Stop doubting how important you are to me”

“Alright, Kakashi-san,” he whispers. “I won’t”

Kakashi smiles softly and lightly hooks their pinky fingers together.

The rest of the walk to the Mission Room is silent.

“You’re done at eight?” Kakashi asks, looking up at the Tower and grimacing at the thought of his paperwork piles.

“Yeah”

“I’ll see you then,” Kakashi glances around before kissing Iruka on the cheek and disappearing.

He reluctantly changes out of his Sukea disguise before slipping into his office. He had given Shizune the day off so he's not expecting any interruptions and is able to put a dent in the never-ending paperwork by the time eight rolls around.

He peeks into the Mission Room to see Iruka waving off a colleague as he files papers and locks up. Kakashi waits for him to be alone before making his presence known.

"Ramen, sensei?"

"Are you channeling Naruto?" Iruka laughs, "am I going to have to make you eat your vegetables too?"

"If you feed them to me, I'll eat anything," Kakashi winks. Iruka rolls his eyes in fond exasperation. "I'd even drink poison for you, sensei"

"I'll keep that in mind," Iruka says dryly, sliding papers into his bag, "for the next time you annoy me enough to contemplate the various uses for an exploding barrier seal and certain Rokudaimes"

"Maa, sensei, I'm hurt," Kakashi pouts, "there's other Rokudaimes you regularly think about killing?"

Iruka gives him a long look.

"Because it's you, I'll make sure the poison at least tastes good," Iruka says flatly. Kakashi grins.

"I love it when you talk treason to me," Kakashi follows him down the hall, minimizing his presence.

"Do you even hear half the things that come out of your mouth?" Iruka asks in exasperation as they begin a familiar trek to Ichiraku's.

"Of course! Sometimes they even surprise me"

"Of course they do," Iruka sighs. "Sometimes I question my own sanity for falling in love with you"

The flutter in Kakashi's chest at the fact Iruka took their earlier conversation to heart makes him wonder if he can do a Raikiri on himself in case it stops.

"Don't worry," Kakashi practically chirps, "I do too. I have no idea what I did to deserve you"

He watches gleefully as Iruka's face turns red.

"*Anata*," the fond exasperation is back, "why-" Iruka trails off as his gaze lands on someone walking in their direction.

Anger and panic flood Kakashi as he recognizes the pale blue hair and frail form.

"Mizuki…" Iruka says, eyes wide.

Mizuki looks gaunt, clearly someone at the end of their life. He's wearing loose grey pants and a loose black shirt, both of which only serve to highlight his gauntness.

Kakashi shifts to step in front of Iruka but he gets a subtle head shake. His entire body is tense and on edge, prepared for a battle. If he still had the Sharingan it would be spinning fast enough to give him a headache. He knows his reaction may be overkill considering the man is a dying civilian now, but all he can think about is the scar on Iruka's back and, although they've lessened over the years, the nightmares that plagued him for so long and all he can see is enemy.

"Iruka"

"They told me you were out," Iruka says calmly.

"Yeah. Six months to live. At best," Mizuki glares at the ground. "You look well"

"I am"

"I'm glad," Mizuki's gaze flicks to Kakashi and he sneers. Kakashi's adrenaline response beeps the fuck up and he's suddenly wrestling with his killing intent because if it escapes, the range will be broad. "Wasn't enough to have the Sandaime in your pocket, Iruka?"

"Mizuki, let's not start," Iruka holds his hands up. Something about the fact that Iruka is still so calm about the whole thing soothes a little bit of Kakashi's inner turmoil and he manages to battle back his killing intent. He latches onto that calmness.

"Fine," Mizuki kicks a rock, "I don't care anymore anyways. Do whatever you want. I'm not even allowed to seek you out anyways," he walks around Iruka. Kakashi exhales in relief.

"Mizuki!" Iruka calls. Mizuki stops but doesn't turn. "Take care," Iruka

says softly, “and…I hope the rest of your life is peaceful”

“Always naive, Iruka,” Mizuki sneers, “but…thanks”

Kakashi watches Iruka watch Mizuki walk down the street.

“Hey,” he bumps his fingers against the back of Iruka’s hand, “you alright?”

Iruka’s smile doesn’t quite reach his eyes.

“I’m alright,” he murmurs, taking Kakashi’s hand in his. The adrenaline flees Kakashi’s veins and he feels that horrible post-mission come down wash over him for the first time in years. “It’s just weird, seeing him again after all these years”

“Suddenly, I don’t feel like ramen,” Kakashi says, remembering their photo album discussion and suddenly wanting to be somewhere safe and unexposed, just the two of them, recognizing it as the post-mission paranoia. “Do you mind if we just go home? I can make something instead”

“Mizuki used to hate ramen,” Iruka glances at Ichiraku’s, “I wonder why he was here”

Kakashi narrows his eyes at the stand.

Mizuki wasn’t waiting…was he?

He had said no initiating interactions with Iruka.

Kakashi can feel himself getting anxious again. He takes Iruka’s hand and pulls him along. Iruka stops him.

“*Anata*,” he says, stepping close and pressing a kiss to Kakashi’s masked lips. “It’s okay. It was a bit of a surprise but it’s a relief”

“A relief?”

“I was just waiting for the encounter between him. I knew it would happen sooner or later and I was running circles in my head over how it would go. But now it’s happened. And,” Iruka blushes, “I’m glad it happened with you here. It made it easier to face him knowing I wasn’t alone”

“Never,” Kakashi kisses the back of his hand, relieved that Iruka is alright, “not as long as I’m alive and if there’s a way to become a

ghost, not even when I'm dead"

Iruka laughs and the shadows at the edges of his doe brown eyes disappear. He loops his pinky through Kakashi's and lightly bumps their shoulders together. Kakashi relaxes entirely, leaning into Iruka's space.

"You'd better not die on me, Rokudaime-sama," Iruka says, raising an eyebrow, "otherwise I'll personally take out every single ANBU who failed to keep you alive"

"My, sensei," Kakashi feels giddy at the fact that Iruka's feelings echo his own, "that does sound like true love"

"Is it so surprising?" Iruka smiles up at the sunset sky, "I love you, Kakashi"

Not as much as I love you, Kakashi thinks, staring at Iruka's profile.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Iruka-sensei,” Kakashi practically sings out, sliding into his office through the window.

“Kakashi-san,” Iruka quirks an eyebrow, “what are you doing here? Shirking your duties?”

“I needed to escape,” he sets the takeout bag on Iruka’s desk and tugs down his mask. “Sensei, I’m going to drown in paperwork”

“And it’s not paperwork you can turn in late or mangled”

“Sensei, you don’t have to sound like you’re enjoying my suffering,” Kakashi whines, taking out the bentos and dragging a chair over.

“Not ramen?” Iruka laughs.

“Shizune said I can’t eat ramen for every meal. And I don’t need to haunt Ichiraku’s just to see you anymore”

“You never needed to haunt Ichiraku’s to see me”

Kakashi drops into the chair and studies the vice principal. He’s staring distractedly at a paper in front of him. Kakashi gets up and crosses around the desk to lean down in front of Iruka.

“You’re troubled by something”

“How do you always know?” Iruka sighs.

Kakashi reaches out and tugs loose his ponytail, gently threading his fingers through the dark hair and massaging Iruka’s scalp. Iruka’s eyes flutter closed and he leans into Kakashi’s hands. Kakashi’s gaze tracks over his face, taking the chance he has to study the handsome scarred face.

“You get this little furrow between your brows when you’re worried,” Kakashi presses a finger against the line, “right here. Out with it, sensei, what’s bothering you?”

“Not so much me,” Iruka exhales as Kakashi’s fingers work down to

the back of his neck. “It’s Shino”

“Oh?”

“He has doubts,” Iruka explains, “he’s questioning whether he’s a good teacher and he hasn’t even become an assistant yet”

“Sounds like someone else I know”

“It’s hard to see one of my former students struggling,” Iruka admits, “he hasn’t been my student in years, and yet I still want to help him”

Kakashi feels the affection swell in his chest at Iruka’s genuine care. It takes all his self-control not to give in to the almost overwhelming urge to kiss Iruka because he knows if he does he won’t be able to stop and then Iruka will get mad because they’re on Academy grounds.

“Talk to him,” Kakashi says gently, “I seem to remember another sensei who had doubts about his abilities after one of his brat students stole a scroll, even though it turned out to be a fake placed by the very clever, brilliant and handsome Rokudaime”

Iruka snorts, “Kakashi-san…” he opens his eyes. They widen at their proximity.

“Iruka-sensei,” he responds, gaze dropping to Iruka’s lips as they form his name.

“Excuse me!” there’s a knock on the door and Iruka jumps back as if he was burned. He sweeps his hair back into a ponytail with cheeks burning red. “Vice Principal Umino?”

“Come in!” he calls.

Kakashi leans against the wall as a young teacher enters the room holding a couple of papers. She startles when she sees Kakashi, who holds up his hand in a lazy wave.

She bows deeply in Kakashi’s direction.

“Iruka-sensei, I didn’t know you were friends with the Rokudaime”

“Ah, we know each other”

Kakashi resists the urge to roll his eyes.

Stubborn sensei.

“Iruka-sensei is really amazing. Friends with the Rokudaime, Naruto’s father…” the sparkle in the young woman’s eyes both makes Kakashi want to both laugh and to possessively stake his claim on his sensei.

“Ah,” Iruka scratches at his scar, “did you need something, Sadoru-sensei?”

She sets the papers on the desk. “Can you review these before the next staff meeting?”

“Sure thing,” Iruka smiles.

“She has a bit of a crush,” Kakashi chortles once the young woman has left with a series of bows in his direction, “can’t say I blame her, she has very good taste”

“Anata, be serious,” Iruka shakes his head, “Sadoru-sensei is just young and I helped her through her first couple of classes”

Kakashi nudges the bento in front of Iruka and takes the papers from him before opening his own.

“Eat first, entertain me”

“*Anata*,” Iruka rolls his eyes but obediently opens the bento.

“Tell me more about Shino’s struggle”

Iruka sighs. “I think it’s a struggle every new teacher goes through. I just don’t want his doubts to hold him back before he’s even started. I agreed to letting him shadow a few teachers so he could figure out if that’s what he really wanted to do”

“If he’s so easily shaken, then perhaps it’s not the right path for him”

“I think it is,” Iruka says, “he just needs more confidence”

Kakashi chews thoughtfully on a chunk of rice.

“From what I remember of the kid, and what I know of the Aburame clan, I have a hard time seeing him as a teacher”

“He’s surprisingly good with the kids,” Iruka taps his chopsticks idly before dropping a piece of eggplant in Kakashi’s bento. “They like him, especially once they get past the bugs, you can tell he truly cares and that’s what’s important. Teaching is a skill that can be learned, but caring is not”

“So you’re worried he thinks because he doesn’t have the teaching skill he’ll decide the path isn’t for him?”

“Yes. Not everyone is a natural born teacher, Kakashi,” Iruka pushes his rice around and Kakashi can tell Iruka’s more preoccupied than he’s letting in because he’s not eating.

“Stop playing with your food, sensei,” Kakashi laughs, “unless you want me to feed you,” he holds up a piece of fish.

Iruka rolls his eyes before picking up some rice and chewing it almost dramatically to make a point. “There, stopped playing”

Kakashi grins because really, sometimes he thinks Iruka spends far too much time around kids.

The conversation shifts to other things. The upcoming graduation exams, the fact Izumo and Kotetsu are finally officially tying the knot, the recent tentative relationship between Anko and a chunin she met during the war that took everyone by surprise except for Iruka, Kotetsu and Izumo. Even Kakashi had been a little shocked until he found out the chunin was once responsible for performing the autopsies for the Intelligence Division. Definitely warped enough for Anko.

There’s a sudden tapping at the window and they both turn to see Tenzo sitting on the ledge.

“Hello Iruka-sensei,” Tenzo salutes. Kakashi knows the man is still a little starstruck from Iruka’s kindness during the rebuilding. Iruka waves cheerfully.

“Kohai”

“Senpai”

“Tenzo knows, by the way,” Kakashi says, dismissive on the surface but testing the waters, “about us. Tenzo, you can take off your mask, it’s just me and Iruka”

“Oh!” Iruka’s eyes widen almost comically large. “Alright…”

“It’s the only way he can dodge his ANBU guards,” Tenzo sounds tired as he lifts his porcelain mask up and Kakashi grins. “As long as I know where he is, he should be fine”

“Oh,” Iruka scratches at his scar, “you’ve got a busy schedule, especially chasing after Kakashi-sama,” Kakashi shoots him wounded puppy eyes at the sama only to be summarily ignored. “Do you ever rest, Captain Yamato?”

“Tenzo here is a good little worker bee,” Kakashi teases and Tenzo sighs.

“Be nicer to your kohai,” Iruka chides, “poor thing works too hard”

Kakashi scratches the back of his head. Tenzo is staring at Iruka like he hung the moon.

“Maa, Tenzo, do you want to take a break?”

“I…I’m fine, senpai,” Tenzo turns to Iruka and bows, “thank you for your consideration, Iruka-san”

“No need for thanks,” Iruka holds his hands up and laughs nervously. “You do a lot for this village”

“Maa, sensei, you’re gonna embarrass him,” Kakashi wraps his arm around Iruka’s neck and drapes himself heavily over his back in a slightly overdramatic show of possessiveness, even though he knows his kohai isn’t really a threat considering he’s ass over teakettle for Gai. It feeds the urge to show somebody that Iruka is his, “he sprouts when he gets embarrassed”

“Sprouts?” Iruka asks at the same time Tenzo whines out “senpai!”

“Ah look,” Kakashi reaches out and plucks a sunflower off Tenzo’s shoulder. “Sprouts,” he holds it out to Iruka with a masked kiss to his cheek.

“Oh,” Iruka looks bemused as he accepts the flower. “Is that normal, Captain Yamato?”

“Um, sort of,” Tenzo shoots Kakashi a glare. “It’s gotten better but senpai likes to tease me about it”

“*Anata*,” Iruka turns his head to glare at Kakashi who melts at the term like always. “Stop teasing your kohai!”

“Maa, sensei, what’s a cute little kohai for if not to be teased?” Kakashi winks.

Iruka sighs and turns to Tenzo, “Yamato-san, if this one gives you any

trouble, come to me”

Tenzo looks delighted as his gaze slides over to Kakashi.

“Many thanks, Iruka-san,” he bows, “you’re far too nice for my senpai”

“Kohai,” Kakashi growls without any real heat, enjoying the sight of two of his precious people ganging up on him. Iruka lightly bops him on the head.

“He’s right you know,” Iruka says, but his voice is laced with a fondness that takes the sting out of his words.

“Oh, believe me, I know,” Kakashi says so quietly that only Iruka can hear. He’s rewarded by a flush that overtakes Iruka’s entire face and a confused glance from Tenzo.

“Kakashi-san…” Iruka shakes his head. Kakashi can feel his cheek brushing against the ends of his hair with the motion and he nuzzles his head against Iruka’s cheek.

Tenzo is staring at him in shocked amusement.

“Senpai, you have a meeting in thirty minutes”

“Ugh,” Kakashi groans, pressing his face against Iruka’s neck as if he could hide. “Not the council again”

“The council again”

Iruka’s hand comes up to lightly scratch at his head and if Kakashi had a tail it would be wagging.

“Go,” Iruka nudges him off his shoulder.

“Can I send a clone instead?”

“We talked about this,” Iruka says sternly, “you are not to use clones for Hokage business”

“But-”

“No buts,” Iruka pushes him towards a now-masked Tenzo. “I have to finish up the final report for graduation rates,” he leans in, “if you behave, listen to Yamato and Shizune, and do what needs to be done, we can do something special tonight”

“Oh?” Kakashi tilts his head, “is that a promise?”

“Only if you behave,” Iruka says, stepping back towards his desk.

“Promise,” Kakashi holds up a hand.

“Now go,” Iruka points to the window and Kakashi knows it’s because Iruka knows he won’t use the door.

With one last masked kiss against Iruka’s cheek, Kakashi is following Tenzo out the window. The run towards his office to get his robes is short.

“Senpai”

“Hm?”

“I’m happy for you,” Tenzo says, “Iruka-san…he’s really good for you”

“I know he is,” Kakashi scrubs a hand through his hair, “I don’t know why he puts up with me”

“Me neither,” Tenzo shrugs and Kakashi glares at his not cute kohai. “But for some reason he does. So senpai, don’t lose him”

Kakashi glances at the direction of the Academy.

“I don’t intend to”

Chapter End Notes

i love the idea of Tenzo sprouting flowers

Chapter 11

“ITS HAPPENING!”

Kakashi jumps to his feet, holding a kunai as the door to the apartment slams open.

“What? Naruto, what is it, what’s wrong?” Iruka emerges from the kitchen.

“THE BABY’S COMING!”

“OH MY GOD!” Iruka’s responding shout has Kakashi internally laughing at how similar the two of them are. “DONT PANIC NARUTO!”

“IM NOT PANICKING!” Naruto is clearly panicking, “DAD WHAT DO I DO!?”

“Go to the hospital with her,” Iruka suddenly snaps into Responsible Parent mode, “Sakura is probably with her right now. Sakura is the best there is”

“Hospital, right,” Naruto looks lost and uncertain. Iruka crosses the kitchen in two steps, pulling him into a tight hug.

“Congratulations,” tears stream down his cheeks. Naruto hugs back tightly.

“I can’t believe it,” Naruto whispers.

“Go stop and get her flowers and then get your ass over to the hospital and be with her!” Iruka snaps.

“Yes sir!” Naruto says, before pausing, “are you going to be there?”

“Wouldn’t miss it for the world,” Iruka promises.

Naruto’s watery smile is shaky and hopeful and terrified and Iruka squeezes him tightly.

“Oh, hi Kakashi-sensei!” Naruto calls, running out of the apartment.

“Hi,” Kakashi responds in bemusement.

“Wait,” Iruka blinks, “did he…did he just…he just called me dad?”

“Looks like you’re a granddad now,” Kakashi says, feeling something soft unfurl inside him at just how young and uncertain Iruka looks right now.

Kakashi hugs him as he bursts into tears.

“Come on,” Kakashi laces their fingers together, “let’s go meet the grandkid”

“We’re grandparents,” Iruka says in awe. Kakashi blushes at ‘we’.

“Maa, I don’t-”

“Hatake Kakashi, if you even think about saying you’re not, I will make you sleep on the couch”

Kakashi blinks. “Yes, dear”

“Now let’s go”

They’re greeted at the hospital by a heavily pregnant Ino. Kakashi always found it funny that Naruto’s friends all got pregnant around the same time.

It makes him feel very old.

Suddenly, the doors open and Naruto steps out looking pale and shaky and delighted and disbelieving and-

“It’s a boy…” he whispers.

Kakashi is pretty sure Iruka’s cheer is the loudest and he can’t help but chuckle.

Naruto drags the two of them into the hospital room where Hinata is looking tired and pale, but absolutely radiant, and holding a little whiskered baby.

“Congratulations,” Iruka says gently, pulling Hinata into a one-armed hug, “he’s beautiful and healthy”

“Thank you,” Hinata smiles. Kakashi’s throat knots at the way Naruto stares at her with love in his eyes. He never would have expected any of this from his most knuckle-headed student.

Iruka's eyes glitter with tears.

"Iruka-sensei…" Naruto says, "when are you and Kakashi-sensei gonna get married?"

Kakashi blinks.

No way. There's no possible way Naruto knows they're together. No possible way that he's the only one who's figured it out.

"You guys both seem so lonely and it would be good if you found someone-"

Of course he didn't. Kakashi almost laughs.

Iruka glances at Kakashi with a question in his eyes. Kakashi shrugs imperceptibly. He doesn't care if Naruto knows. If they ask, he won't likely blab it to the council.

"Well, you see-" Iruka begins.

The door slams open.

"OH MY GOD!" Hyuga Hanabi screeches. "MY NEPHEW!"

Iruka steps out of the way so the younger Hyuga can coo and fuss at the newborn.

"Do we tell him?" Iruka asks quietly. Kakashi glances over to where Naruto and Hinata are cooing quietly at their son and Hanabi is crying.

"Maybe not yet," Kakashi murmurs, "this should be about them"

"You're sweet," Iruka squeezes his hand.

They step out of the hospital room to allow Naruto and Hinata time with their friends and with Hinata's family.

"Iruka-sensei? Kakashi-sensei?"

"Sakura," Iruka greets, "you're looking well. You're also due soon, right?"

"Less than a month," Sakura blushes, "it's nice how everyone will be around the same age. Makes play dates easy"

“I’m really happy for everyone,” Iruka’s smile is warm, “we both are, right Kakashi?”

Kakashi notes the drop of honorific and he smiles.

“Couldn’t be happier,” he confirms, wondering if Sakura will figure it out. “The brats have brats of their own now”

“*Anata!*”

“Sorry,” he lightly taps Iruka on the back of the hand in apology, earning a raised eyebrow.

“Ne, Iruka-sensei,” Sakura looks mischievous. “Will you babysit for us?”

“Of course,” Iruka looks seconds away from crying, “you can count on me”

“Thank god she didn’t ask me,” Kakashi murmurs once Sakura has left.

Iruka’s smile is equal parts sweet and vicious.

“Oh, *anata*, you’re forgetting that we live together”

Kakashi feels a cold chill slide down his spine.

“Iruka, darling, dearest, love of my life, you wouldn’t make me babysit, would you? Me. Of all people”

“You’re not as bad with children as you think you are,” Iruka says.

“I’m terrible with children. Especially the small ones. I can sort of handle the ones this tall,” he holds a hand up to his hip, “but anything shorter and you’re asking for trouble”

Iruka’s smile sends a chill right down Kakashi’s spine.

It’s not until eight months later that Kakashi’s worst fear comes true.

“Iruka-sensei!”

Kakashi tugs up his mask as Naruto comes barging into the apartment.

“In here!”

Kakashi watches as Naruto completely misses the fact that he’s

lounging on the couch, so focused on his target.

“It’s my anniversary this weekend…” Naruto scratches the back of his head sheepishly, “would you be willing to watch Boruto for a bit?”

“Of course,” Iruka’s voice is warm and Kakashi feels his adrenaline spike.

Oh no.

“Maa, sensei,” Kakashi says carefully when they’re alone, “I think I have a challenge with Gai this weekend…”

Iruka raises an eyebrow.

“Do you now”

“Yup”

“And this has nothing to do with the fact that Naruto happens to be bringing his son over”

Kakashi wilts. “You know I’m bad with kids. Especially kids that small. Is he even considered a kid at that size?”

“I won’t make you stay,” Iruka says, but he sounds so defeated that Kakashi knows he has no choice but to stay.

“I will,” Kakashi says, scrubbing a hand through his hair.

Iruka’s smile is completely worth it.

Despite that, Kakashi spends the next three days fretting over Saturday

He hides in the bedroom when Naruto and Hinata show up, hoping he can just lurk there the entire time and not have to actually deal with the baby.

But an hour later and he’s both getting bored and missing Iruka so, with all the stealth he would use on an S-rank mission, he ventures out to the living room and peeks in.

Iruka is sitting curled up on the couch holding a bundle of blankets.

“I wondered when you’d get curious,” Iruka sounds amused and Kakashi sighs. Of course Iruka would know where he is. “Don’t you

want to meet your grandson?"

"I…I don't know," he says softly. "I'm not good with kids"

"You're probably better than you think you are," Iruka says. He holds the bundle of blankets out. "Hold him?"

"What do I do?" Kakashi panics.

"*Anata*, just breathe," Iruka looks amused, "you're not going to hurt him"

"How do you know that? He's so small and fragile. He doesn't even… his hands are too small to hold a kunai and his fine motor skills are probably not strong enough to handle hand signs…" Kakashi takes a step back from Iruka and the bundle. "Iruka. I've killed kids that size before"

He expects Iruka to be angry at this admission, even though he's told Iruka before. He does not expect Iruka to sit down on the couch.

"*Anata*, come here," he gestures.

"I-"

"*Come here,*" he repeats more firmly. Kakashi edges towards the couch, sitting on the complete opposite end of Iruka and the baby. Iruka rolls his eyes and moves closer. Kakashi holds his hands up in front of him defensively and practically flattens himself against the arm of the couch. It earns him another thoroughly unimpressed look.

"Really, Iruka, I can't do this," Kakashi says, "he's too…too small and too important and I-"

"Trust me," Iruka says. And what else can Kakashi do but relent? "Hold your arms like this…there, that's good"

"Iruka, I-" a warm bundle finds it's way into Kakashi's arms and he thinks his heart is going to stop.

"Relax, *anata*," Iruka's voice is gentle, soothing, his hand remains gently on Kakashi's elbow which helps a bit, "you're not going to hurt him"

Kakashi chances a glance down at the bundle and his eyes widen.

The little face is so round with such blue, blue eyes. The baby, Boruto,

hiccups a sound before cooing happily up at Kakashi. He has two whisker marks on each cheek.

“Oh,” Kakashi says softly. “Hi there”

The baby giggles and one chubby arm reaches up for Kakashi’s face.

“Doesn’t he look like Naruto?”

“Almost exactly,” Kakashi murmurs, tentatively reaching up to press a shaking finger against one of the whisker marks. Boruto grabs his finger and it takes all of Kakashi’s shinobi training not to flinch. “Iruka…”

“It’s okay,” the fond amusement that laces Iruka’s voice settles some of Kakashi’s nerves. “He likes you”

“Ah,” Kakashi laughs nervously.

“See? It’s not so bad, is it?” Iruka’s smile is warm and reassuring. He withdraws his hand from Kakashi’s arm and Kakashi instinctively holds the bundle tighter.

“I…Iruka, it’s terrifying,” Kakashi says bluntly, shaken by the tiny, fragile, trusting thing in his arms. “You don’t understand. You’re built for this, this whole,” he waves his free fingers, “kid thing. My hands are too blood-stained to hold something so…pure. I know it’s illogical, but…” he exhales, “what if I taint him”

“No,” Iruka says firmly, “you won’t”

“How do you know?” Kakashi looks at Boruto’s face. The blue eyes slide closed and he panics. “Iruka, what-”

“He’s sleeping, *anata*. Babies sleep a lot,” Kakashi can’t place Iruka’s expression because of the sheer amount of emotion written across his features. “And I know because I know you. How long has it been for us, Kakashi?”

“Eight years…”

“Exactly,” Iruka’s laugh is soft and he rests his chin on Kakashi’s shoulder. “We’ve been together eight years now. I know you. I know your heart. And your heart is kind. Didn’t you tell me that’s why Sandaime pulled you from ANBU?”

Kakashi remembers that confession. Rather fuzzily. They were pretty

drunk. He looks away, down at the sleeping face.

He's still a little scared of the kid.

They sit like that for several minutes before Kakashi begins to relax. Boruto doesn't do much else than sleep.

"Is he alright?" Kakashi asks after what feels like a long time.

"Like I said, babies sleep a lot," Iruka shrugs. "He likes you"

"Maybe…maybe it's not so bad," Kakashi admits quietly.

Iruka presses a soft kiss to his cheek. "I'll be back in a moment"

"No, wait," Kakashi says, panicking again, "what if he wakes up?"

"Just keep holding him," Iruka smiles, "you can do it, Kakashi, I trust you"

Iruka disappears into the other room. Kakashi focuses on Boruto's tiny face. The equally tiny fingers still tightly wrapped around his own.

He hears a flash and looks up to see Iruka grinning at him from behind the camera.

"Sorry," he doesn't look very sorry, "you just look so adorable like that"

Kakashi rolls his eyes fondly as Iruka leaves again. He stares apprehensively at the sleeping baby, praying he stays asleep until Iruka comes back from wherever he went. He has vague memories of seeing parents with their babies and tries to mimic the rocking motion.

Blue eyes pop open. The baby gurgles before his face scrunches up and he begins to wail. Kakashi panics.

"Iruka!"

"What is it?"

"What do I do!?"

"It's okay," Iruka takes the bundle from him and he exhales in relief, "I figured this would happen. Naruto said he gets fussy around six. It's dinner time for him"

“What do they eat?” Kakashi is imagining small portions of broiled saury, but the baby doesn’t have teeth to chew.

“Formula,” Iruka says, disappearing into the kitchen. He emerges holding a plastic bottle filled with a white liquid. “Do you want to try?”

“Nope”

“Alright,” Iruka laughs, shifting Boruto into a one-armed hold and holding the bottle out. Small hands wrap around it and Kakashi watches in amazement as the baby begins to drink.

His gaze flicks across Iruka, dark hair falling over his shoulder in a loose braid, wearing threadbare sweatpants that Kakashi thinks might be his, and a t-shirt with the Konoha emblem emblazoned on the front and cooing at the tiny bundle easily nestled in the crook of his arm.

He’s a natural at this and Kakashi feels an uncomfortable pit of something war with the softness swelling in his chest.

“Did you…ever want children of your own?” Kakashi asks, a little afraid of the answer.

“Honestly? No,” Iruka laughs, “I love kids. But I spend all day around them, I think I’d go crazy if I had any of my own. Also, I think I would fret far too much. Did you?”

“Definitely not,” Kakashi shakes his head, feeling relieved that Iruka wasn’t missing out on children because of Kakashi. “You look good with a baby though”

Iruka laughs softly, blushing. He holds the kid over his shoulder and pats him on the back until he makes a small burping sound.

Boruto falls asleep quickly after that and Iruka holds him out to Kakashi who quickly shakes his head. He’s grateful Iruka doesn’t push it. Instead, he sits on the couch next to Kakashi.

Kakashi peers over his shoulder to look at the baby from a safe distance. Feeling slightly braver now that he doesn’t, quite literally, have such a tiny life in his hands, he reaches out to touch the thatch of blonde curls. They’re silky soft and Kakashi is struck by how similar to Naruto this kid looks.

“I guess he’s kinda cute…” Kakashi mumbles. “Amazing they grow up

to be such brats”

“Isn’t it?” Iruka says with such fondness Kakashi raises an eyebrow.

Never in a million years would Kakashi have ever thought he’d be sitting on the couch of an apartment he shares with someone he loves, trusts with his entire being, and with the baby of one of his successful students.

He wonders what Minato-sensei would think.

He thinks his teacher would be happy for him. He tugs Iruka until he can fit his arms around him. Iruka shifts to a comfortable position, back against Kakashi’s chest. Kakashi brushes his fingers through Iruka’s hair and kisses his cheek.

“Maybe this isn’t so bad,” Kakashi murmurs.

“Wait until he becomes a toddler,” Iruka remarks, “this will seem like a D-rank compared to that”

Kakashi shudders at the thought.

Naruto and Hinata return while Kakashi is in the shower and when Kakashi emerges Iruka is laying in the bed childfree and half-asleep.

Kakashi is rather grateful they don’t have any kids of their own as he slides into the bed next to Iruka.

“I love you,” Kakashi murmurs, “I love you for being like this, you know?”

Iruka rolls over to face him, fingers gently trailing down his cheek.

“And I love you for trying,” Iruka responds, “I know this was outside your comfort zone, but you did really well with him”

Kakashi flushes at the praise, leaning in and kissing the younger man slowly.

“You’re a good man, Hatake Kakashi,” Iruka says with a gentle conviction, “even when you don’t think you are”

When Iruka says it like that, he can almost believe it.

Chapter 12

“Guess what?”

“What?” Iruka looks up as Kakashi drapes his arms around Iruka’s neck like a human scarf.

“Guess who gets to retire?”

“Really?” Iruka turns to look at Kakashi in surprise.

“Really!” Kakashi is practically giddy. “Of course I have to stick around and finish the transition over to Naruto, but in six months I am a free man”

“Ah, congratulations *anata*,” Iruka reaches up to tug down Kakashi’s mask and kiss him. “What do you want to do to celebrate?”

“You”

He’s rewarded with a vicious blush and Iruka smacking him on the shoulder.

“*Anata!*” Iruka glares. “Be serious”

“I’ve told you,” he slips around to sit across Iruka’s lap, “I’m always serious when it comes to you,” he leans in to nibble at Iruka’s ear. Iruka exhales shakily and grips Kakashi’s hips, letting his head fall back.

Suddenly, brown eyes widen and Iruka shoves him.

“Ah! Not at the Academy!” Iruka smacks him repeatedly with a folder, “how many times do I-” Kakashi kisses him quickly before slipping back out the window with a laugh.

“Iruka-sensei,” Kakashi says, feeling giddy, “I have something I want to ask you, are you free for dinner?”

Iruka glances at the schedule on his desk.

“I’ve got a late meeting with some parents, ends at nine or so,” he says reluctantly.

“Ah,” Kakashi playfully mopes, “oh well, no big deal, I understand

how important I am to you, I now know where our relationship and my attempted Youthful Expression of Love," Iruka twitches slightly, "falls on the hierarchy of importance-"

Iruka rolls his eyes fondly, gripping Kakashi by the vest and kissing him.

"Be quiet and behave," he spins him around and closes his window with a playful wink. Kakashi plasters himself to the glass, sliding down it slowly. It's totally worth it when Iruka actually laughs into his hand.

See you tonight the younger man signs in field language and Kakashi leaves.

After a grueling day of paperwork, he's going to be so grateful to foist off everything onto Naruto soon, he decides to wait around for Iruka.

It'll be good to leave some paperwork to show Naruto the next morning, after all.

He ditches his ANBU guard, and at this point he wonders if Tenzo has said something or if he really needs to train them better because this is just sad, and makes his way to the Academy, landing lightly on the ledge outside Iruka's office.

Kakashi peeks into the window.

Iruka is sitting on one couch, a couple is sitting on the other.

He settles below the slightly cracked window and listens to Iruka's voice.

"…good student, but has anger issues"

"I'm not sure where those came from," the woman despairs, "he was so happy and cheerful"

"Did he experience any recent upheavals in his life? A death of someone close, a new sibling, moving?"

"Not that we know of…"

Kakashi thinks they're going to be there for awhile, so he decides to explore the Academy grounds, maybe find a nice tree to read in.

He sees a kid sitting despondently on a swing. He can't be any older

than ten, probably closer to eight. He wonders if this is Anger Issues and his curiosity gets the better of him. Kid doesn't seem angry.

Kakashi henges into Sukea and strolls forward.

"You're here a little late"

"Fuck off old man"

Kakashi blinks. Yup, Anger Issues. "That's not a very nice thing to say, you know"

"I don't care," Anger Issues glares, "I don't want to be nice!"

"Why not?"

"Shinobi aren't supposed to be nice. Don't you know anything?"

Kakashi sits on the ground beneath the tree.

"Who says shinobi aren't supposed to be nice?"

"Everyone! Shinobi are supposed to kill people," he crosses his arms.

"True," Kakashi tilts his head, "but why does that mean you can't be nice?"

"Killing people isn't nice"

"No," Kakashi muses, "I suppose it isn't"

"Everyone wants me to be a shinobi," Anger Issues slumps against the rope of the swing and Kakashi suspects the anger issues are simply a front. He's familiar enough with Iruka's temper to know that sometimes it hides emotions he otherwise doesn't want known.

"What do you want?"

The boy clams up. Kakashi sighs loudly, and tilts his head back to look at the sky.

"You don't want to kill people, huh?"

"I didn't say that!" the boy snaps, "you don't know anything about me!"

"No, I don't," Kakashi agrees, "but I don't think you want to kill

people”

“I do!”

Kakashi pulls out a kunai and hands it to the kid.

“Okay then,” he hums, closing his eyes, “go ahead”

“What?”

“You say you want to kill people, go ahead and kill me”

“What? You-you’re crazy!” there’s the soft clatter of a kunai on the ground as the boy throws it, staring at it like it’s a poisonous snake. “Why do you want me to kill you?”

“So you can see what it’s like”

“I-” the boy glares, “that makes no sense”

Kakashi studies the boy carefully.

“You know, it’s not a bad thing. Not wanting to kill people. Two of the strongest shinobi I know don’t like to kill people”

“Oh yeah?” the boy challenges, “who?”

“Uzumaki Naruto. He would rather talk down an opponent and try to be friends with them, figure out how to end a fight without anyone fighting or dying”

“People call it his talk no jutsu,” the boy mutters.

“And the man he learned it from”

“Rokudaime Hokage?”

“No,” Kakashi almost wants to laugh at the thought of him being the type to avoid killing.

“The Frog Sannin?”

“Not him either”

“Who-?”

“Your very own Vice Principal”

The boy snorts. “Yeah right. Vice Principal Umino probably hasn’t ever done a single shinobi thing in his life much less taught Uzumaki Naruto”

Kakashi quirks an eyebrow. “He did more than teach Naruto. He took care of him, raised him and taught him from when he was barely older than you. He’s like his father”

The brat blinks. “Really? Vice Principal Umino is so boring”

Kakashi bites his tongue to not laugh. Oh if these kids knew half of the shit Iruka pulled at their age.

“Is that so? Why is that?”

“He’s always yelling at us. He doesn’t let us do anything fun. He wears a wig”

“He definitely does not,” Kakashi says instinctively, trying valiantly not to remember the sounds Iruka makes when he pulls his hair. Not in front of a kid. He can see why they think that though, Iruka has a ton of hair.

“Do you know him?”

“We’re very close. Did you know he’s also good friends with the Rokudaime?”

“No way,” the brat snorts, “no way would someone cool like the Rokudaime be friends with Vice Principal Umino. You’re lying”

Kakashi knows Iruka will murder him for this, but he hates the thought of these brats disrespecting him and he’s retiring in a few months anyways. And it’s not like anyone would believe the kid.

He drops the henge.

It’s hilarious watching the brat fall off the swing in his shock.

“R-Rokudaime-sama…” he points.

“One and only,” he says cheerfully.

“You-really? You’re friends with Vice Principal Umino?”

“Mn. I’d say we’re closer even than that”

“Best friends?” his dark eyes are wide.

“Something like,” Kakashi has already incurred Iruka’s wrath enough if he ever finds out about this. “He’s up there with your parents now. Talking about your future as a shinobi,” the brat wilts, “there’s no shame in not wanting to kill. You could be a medi-nin and heal people, join the Cipher Division and work with codebreaking, you could guard the village gates or work the Mission Desk. You could even become a teacher. Or, you could not become a shinobi at all”

“My parents want me to. I don’t wanna disappoint them”

“They worry about you,” Kakashi says, “I think they’d rather see you happy. What do you want to do?”

“…it’s stupid”

“No,” Kakashi says firmly, “it’s not. If it makes you happy, it’s not stupid at all”

“I want to be a librarian”

That…is surprising.

“You know, one of my students would have been a very good librarian. She loved books, loved to research. She was probably the smartest of my students. Why do you want to be a librarian?”

“I like books,” the boy says, “and I like reading and helping people find things to read. I know all the sections of Konoha’s library. I spend a lot of time there. Books don’t make fun of you or treat you like you’re stupid because you can’t throw a kunai properly”

“I see. What’s your favorite book?”

“Too many to count!” the boy’s expression lights up and he goes off on a long-winded explanation of every genre and why he likes them. It’s honestly adorable and Kakashi can see why Iruka likes to teach. Seeing a brat be passionate about something warms his chest. Suddenly his expression dims and he curls in on himself. “Sorry,” he says quietly, “I talk too much”

“On the contrary,” Kakashi says, hating the fact the kid thinks that way already, “I like to read too,” he pulls out a piece of paper and writes down five child-friendly book titles before holding it out to the kid. “These are some of my favorites. Though they may be a little

advanced yet. Reading is a good way to pass the time, a good way to learn about the world. It means you have a good imagination”

The boy looks at the paper in reverence.

“Really?”

“Promise!” Kakashi holds up a hand. “I won’t tell you what to do, kid,” Kakashi gets to his feet, “but whatever you choose to do, do it for yourself and don’t do it half-heartedly. And don’t let anyone tell you the things you like to do are stupid. I have a good friend who’s favorite pastime is to train by running five hundred laps around Konoha on his pinky fingers. Reading is normal, kid”

“Yes sir,” the boy scrambles to his feet and bows. Kakashi turns to walk away. “Rokudaime-sama, why are you at the Academy so late?”

“I told you,” Kakashi tilts his head, “Vice Principal Umino and I are close”

He flickers away, landing lightly on the ledge outside Iruka’s office.

“Thank you so much for understanding”

“Don’t worry,” Iruka’s voice is warm, “children that age are going through far more than we would expect. It may not seem like a big deal to us, but for them it could be world-crushing so if he does open up to you, just be supportive and don’t diminish his concerns. He’s a good student”

Kakashi listens to the farewells before sliding in through the window.

“He wants to be a librarian”

“Hm?”

“The kid. He wants to be a librarian”

“I-what? *Kakashi,* how do you know?”

“I talked to him”

“Talked-?” Iruka blinks, “*anata,* I’m going to need you to start from the beginning”

“He was moping on the swings. Do you know your students think you wear a wig?”

“So I’ve heard,” Iruka says dryly.

“I talked to him a bit. He doesn’t want to kill people,” Iruka inhales, “his parents want him to become a shinobi but he wants to become a librarian because he likes books. Gave a very impassioned little speech too. I guess they’re cute in small doses”

Iruka gives him a long-suffering look laced with fondness before stiffening up.

“You gave me an idea,” Iruka says, eyes suddenly wide as he hurries to his desk.

“No, no,” Kakashi catches him around the middle, “no ideas at this hour, sensei. You can tell me on the way home and deal with it tomorrow”

“*Anata!* Let me-” Kakashi nuzzles against his neck, tugging down his mask to gently nip at his ear before blowing lightly. Iruka shivers against him.

“You’ve been here all day,” Kakashi grabs Iruka’s bag and hops to the window, only for the younger man to grab his collar and haul him back into the room.

“Door is over there,” Iruka points. Kakashi sighs dramatically.

“If I go out the door, will you come with me?”

“Alright,” Iruka raises an eyebrow.

“So what’s your great idea that absolutely needed to be worked tonight sensei?” Kakashi asks, looping their fingers together.

Iruka scratches his scar, cheeks flushing lightly. “Ah, well, I was thinking…maybe there’s other kids out there who don’t want to be shinobi but wouldn’t know what else to do. So I was thinking of some kind of, work experience type thing, at least for the older ones. Break them up into three-man teams and have them follow different careers for an afternoon or two”

“That sounds like a brilliant idea,” Kakashi says, swinging their hands, “kids get experience and the employers get free labor!”

“That’s not how I’m going to present the idea,” Iruka laughs, “but you’re not wrong. *Anata,* you’re oddly energetic”

“Maa, I’m looking forward to my retirement,” Kakashi grins feeling free, “I absolutely hate this job”

Iruka laughs.

The minute the door to the apartment closes behind them, Kakashi has Iruka pressed against the wall and is kissing him until they’re both light-headed.

“*Anata-*”

“I’ve missed you,” Kakashi says in between kisses as he tugs off his vest and they kick off their shoes.

“You saw me this morning,” Iruka runs his fingers through Kakashi’s hair.

“Still,” Kakashi slides his hand up Iruka’s jacket to graze along his sides and Iruka’s eyes flutter shut as he presses closer.

“Bedroom. Now.” Iruka shoves him.

“Bossy, bossy,” Kakashi allows himself to be dragged through the apartment before being shoved onto the bed, Iruka straddling him. “We haven’t done it like this in awhile,” Kakashi muses, making quick work of the navy jacket, revealing the white undershirt that fits a little too nicely across his chest. “Too many clothes,” Kakashi grumbles.

“You’re awfully talkative,” Iruka laughs, grinding their hips together. Kakashi’s hands fly up to grip his waist.

Kakashi doesn’t respond, simply strips the rest of Iruka’s clothes off before stripping off his own in record time.

He tugs Iruka’s hair loose and runs the strands through his fingers.

A wig. He snorts and gathers a handful to tug. Iruka groans.

Kakashi’s other hand explores further and Iruka jolts as his blunt index finger gently circles the puckered skin of his entrance. He carefully slips his finger inside and Iruka moans, rolling his hips.

Kakashi can feel the slick drag of the younger man’s leaking erection against his hip and he sinks his finger in further, curling it slightly before adding another.

The sound that escapes Iruka’s lips tells Kakashi he found the spot. He

rubs it, thumb tracing around the puckered rim.

Iruka's fingers dig into his shoulders as his lithe body presses against Kakashi's. He frantically rocks his hips, cock dragging against Kakashi's hip.

"You're so hot," Kakashi murmurs, carding his other hand through Iruka's thick brown hair as his fingers continue their motions, "just like that"

Iruka whines, entire body flushed red where it's plastered against Kakashi's. He looks so pretty like this; desperate and trusting. Kakashi slightly cruelly quirks his finger, using his blunt fingernails to press the spot before continuing the gentle stroking motion, adding another finger and stretching.

Iruka is panting, breaths coming out in short, hot bursts interspersed with desperate whines against Kakashi's shoulder. Kakashi removes his fingers, slicking his own aching cock with lube before pressing against Iruka's entrance and slowly sliding in.

Tanned fingers dig into his shoulders and Kakashi groans. Iruka is stupidly tight, and so incredibly hot like this: lashes fluttering against his flushed cheeks, hair splayed like a halo beneath him. He slides in all the way and lets his forehead fall against Iruka's.

"I love you," Kakashi murmurs, pressing kisses to Iruka's neck and shoulders and chest. "I love you so much"

"I love you too," Iruka pants, opening his eyes half-lidded. Iruka looks wrecked; body flushed and spasming beneath Kakashi. "I love you so much"

Kakashi feels an overwhelming surge of affection and he kisses Iruka as he begins to thrust. His pace is slow and languid, pulling out all the way before sliding back in. He draws Iruka's leg up and over his shoulder before dragging his fingernails down Iruka's side. Iruka presses close, hand wrapping around the back of Kakashi's neck and his fingers gently card through the back of his hair.

Iruka arches his back and Kakashi nips at his neck as he holds tight, matching Kakashi's leisurely pace. Chocolate brown eyes open to catch and hold Kakashi's own.

Kakashi's rhythm falters at the overwhelmingly blatant warmth and affection, love, in Iruka's gaze and his release is ripped from his body,

catching him by surprise.

Iruka's fingers dig into his shoulders and his own release splatters against their chests as he cries out.

Kakashi is left a little shaken by the intensity of Iruka's emotions towards him. He doesn't think anyone has ever felt that way, looked at him like that.

He's even more shaken at the fact that he knows that he feels similarly strongly. He would do anything for Iruka. He thinks that if Iruka were to ask he would even willingly abandon Konoha if it meant they could be together.

"Ugh," Iruka groans, "I'm so sticky"

Kakashi laughs, leaning down and kissing him before getting up to get a washcloth to clean them both up.

When Kakashi emerges from the shower, Iruka is leaning against the railing with his mug of tea. His hair falls loose and messy around his shoulders and he's wearing one of Kakashi's shirts and his ridiculous ramen pajama pants.

He looks so domestic and soft and Kakashi is overcome by a swell of love so painful that it nearly drops him to his knees.

"Marry me"

He hadn't intended to blurt it out like that, but he couldn't help it.

"What?" Iruka turns to look at him, blinking in confusion.

"I want you to marry me," Kakashi says, "I've wanted to ask you for years, since the night we ran into Genma at the bar, but it would be too complicated while I was Hokage. Now that I'm retiring…"

"Are you serious…?" Iruka's eyes are huge and his body posture screams apprehension.

"Maa, I actually hadn't planned on asking like this," Kakashi scratches the back of his head, "I had it all planned out, top of the Hokage Monument, fireworks, all that," he scratches the back of his head again, "but looking at you now, it just felt…right. So, what do you say? Umino Iruka, will you marry me?"

"Oh my god," Iruka covers his mouth with his hand, "I-yes, Kakashi,

yes I will marry you”

Kakashi surges forward, wrapping his arms tightly around Iruka’s waist and kissing him. Iruka’s mug clatters to the ground, shattering, as he throws his arms around Kakashi’s neck.

If they barely make it in from the balcony, well, Tenzo has seen his ass before.

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

For such a level-headed man, Iruka could be really ridiculous sometimes.

He remembers when Naruto's daughter was born, Iruka had panicked so badly he ran into a doorframe and knocked himself out cold.

Or the time when Tsukune finally became a chunin after his incredibly rocky start and Iruka had spent an hour crying in their bathroom.

This, however, this is a familiar ridiculous and not nearly as endearing.

"You could easily make it to full jonin!" Kakashi urges, "tokubetsu would be easy for you!"

"I've told you before, I'm fine staying as a chunin"

"If you're a chunin you can't be principal"

"I never said I wanted to be!"

"What are they arguing over now?" he hears someone say.

"I don't think those two will ever stop arguing"

"They fight worse than a married couple"

"Could you imagine those two actually being married?"

"Please, they would kill each other before the wedding even happened"

"Hatake would totally win in a fight"

"You're too young to remember Umino being a regular fixture at the Mission Desk, my money is on him. He made a jonin piss his pants"

"I'd believe it"

"Why do you keep pushing these things?" Iruka asks, pulling Kakashi

away from the gossip surrounding them in the hallway, “first vice principal, now tokubetsu jonin…”

“Because you’re holding yourself back,” Kakashi says in frustration. “We have an audience”

Iruka glances around. Kakashi takes his elbow and body flickers them to their apartment.

“Iruka, are you genuinely happy?”

“Of course I am!”

“Remember what we said about being honest with each other?”

“I’m already so far removed from the classroom, becoming the principal would just make it worse”

“Iruka, you’ve done amazing things as the vice principal. But I know you have things you want to do, reforms you want to make. Like the lunch system for children without parents or who fend for themselves or can’t afford lunch. Or adding fuinjutsu to the curriculum. As principal, you’d have a stronger voice. The Academy would benefit so much with you running it. No one can easily cross the wishes of the Academy principal, but to be principal you’d have to be jonin”

“I, Kakashi, I’m not anywhere near ready to test for jonin. Even tokubetsu”

“Then I’ll help”

“Anata-”

“Iruka, I hate that you do this. I hate that you hold yourself back. And for what? What reason do you have for not becoming tokubetsu jonin?”

Frustration flashes across his features and he stays silent.

“I don’t know,” Iruka finally admits. “Is it so unbelievable that not everyone cares that much about rank?”

“You? Not at all,” Kakashi says, gently taking Iruka’s hands, “anyone who thinks that rank matters to you, obviously doesn’t know anything about you. Or they’re too young to recall your reign of terror in the Mission Room”

“Don’t call it that,” Iruka groans.

“What else can I call it?” Kakashi laughs, “they whisper about you in traumatized tones. Or are you forgetting the rather creative stunts you pulled regularly with the soundproof barrier? When you made that one jonin wet his pants, what was his name?”

“…there was actually a couple,” Iruka says weakly, hiding his face in his hands. Kakashi tugs his hands away from his face, pressing kisses to his palms.

“I love you so much,” Kakashi laughs. Iruka blushes. “Which is why I push so hard on these things. I hate seeing you holding yourself back but not knowing why”

“It’s not something you can fix, Kakashi”

“So you do know why you do it”

“Sort of?” Iruka scratches his scar with their linked hands, gaze trained on the ground. “I’m not really sure”

“So why do you think it’s something you do?”

“It’s really, it’s stupid”

“Not if it’s something that holds you back,” Kakashi tilts his chin back, “and how many times have I said or done something stupid in front of you?”

“Did I tell you I failed my first Chunin Exams?”

“You did”

“I wasn’t ready. I knew it too. But we had to take it as a three-man cell so I went through with it for my teammates. I panicked and froze, got knocked out by another genin, fell off a cliff. The exams ended but I was still unconscious in the forest. I spent nearly three days lying unconscious under a bush because no one could find me and they brushed it off as me being my usual attention-seeking self. It was Ibiki and Anko who realized something was wrong”

“Ah,” Kakashi hums, “so you hold back because you’re scared you’re not ready for something”

“I guess?” Iruka scrunches his nose, “that’s the only thing I can think of. Because I have thought about it. The second time I was badgered

about taking the tokubetsu jonin exam”

“Second?” Kakashi tilts his head.

“Mn. The first time Sandaime suggested it and I told him I wasn’t ready. The second time it was actually Asuma and Anko and I came close just to get them to stop hounding me but backed out at the last minute because I panicked. The third time I told Sandaime it was because I enjoyed teaching and didn’t want to risk being pulled into missions and that stopped me being asked”

“Iruka,” Kakashi exhales, “then I’m not the only one who thinks you should take the tokubetsu jonin exam. What does that tell you?”

“Everyone thinks I’m a lot more capable than I probably am,” Iruka rolls his eyes.

“Or you’re more capable than you think you are,” Kakashi says, wrapping his arms around Iruka’s waist.

“But traps and barriers can only get me so far. Fuinjutsu isn’t exactly the most useful in a combat situation, especially advanced fuinjutsu. It can be incredibly destructive but it takes time to set up the correct sequence of seals. And I’ve never trained for it in a combat situation”

“So we train for it. I’m sure Gai and Tenzo would be more than happy to help. And probably Anko”

“Does Gai know?”

“I’m not sure. I haven’t said anything, but he’s dating Tenzo who knows, and he’s far more observant than anyone gives him credit for. Does it bother you if he does?”

“No,” Iruka murmurs, resting his forehead on Kakashi’s shoulder, “it doesn’t”

Kakashi squeezes him. “That settles it. We’re going to start training”

“Anata! I never agreed to it!” Iruka protests.

“At the very least, you can train for it. If you train for it, maybe you’ll be more confident about taking it”

“I don’t have time-”

“Don’t think I don’t know you have an hour before going to the

Academy that you use to train," Kakashi says in amusement, "we've been together how long?"

Iruka huffs. "I'm not getting out of this easily, am I?"

"If you really, genuinely don't want to," Kakashi says seriously, "I'm not going to force you into it. All I'm asking is you meet me halfway"

"Alright," Iruka says quietly. Kakashi decides it's a win. With Iruka, it's easier to do these things in small steps so he doesn't realize he's being manipulated. Too much too fast and Iruka catches on. "I'll train for it"

"That's all I ask," Kakashi grins, already coming up with a training plan. Iruka looks slightly dubious.

His first step is to track down Tenzo. Which is easy enough.

"Senpai, how many times do I have to tell you," he says wearily as he lands silently next to Kakashi, "call me Cat when I'm in uniform"

"Right, right," he waves his hand, "Tenzo, I need yours and Gai's help"

"With what?"

"I've managed to convince Iruka into training for the tokubetsu jonin exam"

"I thought he didn't want to take it?"

"Just training," Kakashi says, "but I have a plan for getting him to actually take it"

"Senpai, shouldn't you respect his wishes?"

"He's holding himself back," Kakashi says, "he just needs a little push," he can feel Tenzo's mild disapproval, "he's agreed to train for it. So I need you and Gai to help me. I'm also going to get Anko involved"

"We'll help"

"Tenzo, does Gai know about me and Iruka?"

"I didn't tell him. He figured it out. He's just waiting for you to tell him yourself"

“I see. Well. I suppose I should at some point,” Kakashi slides his hands in his pockets. Tenzo shakes his head.

Anko is easy enough to find. She’s perched at the dango stall when Kakashi tracks her down.

“Anko”

“Kakashi-sama”

“Really, Anko?” Kakashi grimaces, “even you? Drop the sama”

“What’s up?” she chews on her dango stick.

“I need your help. Iruka is training for the tokubetsu jonin exam”

“Damn! We’ve been trying to convince him to take it for years!” Anko bounces excitedly, “how did you-?” she makes a face, “on second thought, I don’t think I want to hear about what you two get up to”

“Will you help?” Kakashi asks.

“Of course I’ll help!” Anko grins, “we’ve been trying for years! I’ll drag Kotetsu and Izumo into it too! They’ll jump at the chance for more training anyways, they’re trying to make jonin”

“Good for them”

“Hey, Kakashi-san”

“Hm?”

“I’m glad you’ve managed to get Iruka to move forward,” Anko says, “I never understood why he held himself back”

Kakashi hums. It’s not like he’s about to tell her Iruka’s reasoning if Iruka hasn’t shared it with her.

“I never thought I’d say this, but you may be a good influence on him,” she remarks.

“Maa, such faith you have in your Hokage,” Kakashi drawls, although he knows he’s thought the same.

“I trust you to be a good Hokage. I didn’t trust you with Iruka’s heart. But he wouldn’t let me give you the shovel talk. He’s been through shit. I know we all have, but his shit is not like, usual shinobi shit”

“Oh?”

“Let’s just say that Iruka has absolutely shit luck in romantic partners. I don’t know if he just makes bad decisions, has a specific type, or if he’s just straight up cursed”

“I know about Mizuki,” Kakashi says.

Anko snorts. “Mizuki’s not the first. Granted, Mizuki probably dealt the most damage both physically and emotionally, but he wasn’t the first. You’ll have to ask Iruka about it though”

Kakashi’s thoughts are chasing each other in his head.

Mizuki wasn’t the first? Did that mean Iruka dated someone else who betrayed the village? Or someone else who betrayed him?

Neither option is particularly pleasant for Kakashi and he spends the rest of the day dwelling on the thought. He finds Iruka in his office late, bringing some of his own paperwork to keep the younger man company, but he can’t get Anko’s words out of his head.

“Iruka”

“Hm?”

“Anko mentioned something today,” Kakashi stares at the ceiling, “worried you were cursed in the romantic department”

“Ah. Did she tell you about Aoi?”

“Aoi?”

“Rokusho Aoi. Long story short, he was on Mizuki’s genin team. We had a thing, just for a few months, but he betrayed the village to become a jonin in Amegakure. Pulled the same stunt Mizuki did, actually. On Ibiki’s little brother”

“Ibiki has a little brother?”

“Not anymore, exactly,” Iruka shakes his head, “it’s complicated. Idate is alive, but they’re not in contact. Anyway, Aoi is actually responsible for a couple of Ibiki’s scars”

“Oh,” Kakashi lets the words sink in, “that’s why she sounded concerned. She said you wouldn’t let her give me the shovel talk”

“Her shovel talk involves real shovels,” Iruka says, “besides, I doubted the odds of you betraying the village by tricking a student were all that high”

“Good to know you have faith in me”

Iruka looks up with a soft smile before getting up from his desk and draping himself across Kakashi. It’s rare that Iruka allows displays of affection on Academy grounds, regardless of the hour.

“I love you”

Kakashi kisses his nose.

“I love you too”

Chapter End Notes

> idk why but I like the idea of Iruka having a “type” and that type is bad boy who ends up being actually bad. except Kakashi. also the parallels between Idate and Aoi and Mizuki and Naruto are just too perfect to pass up

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

hopefully back to regular updates now that school is out of the way □

“I hate you”

“Love you too,” Kakashi looks up. Iruka looks exhausted. “Training going well, I take it?”

“Gai? Tenzo? Anko? Kotetsu? Izumo?” Iruka glares, “I’ve not had a break in two weeks!”

“I told you,” Kakashi grins, “I’d get them to help. Although Kotetsu and Izumo were brought in by Anko”

“Kotetsu and Izumo are far too gleeful about fighting me,” Iruka flops down on top of him. “I don’t think I’ve trained this hard since I was a genin”

“Good,” Kakashi tugs loose his ponytail, threading his fingers through Iruka’s hair and gently massaging his scalp, Iruka melts against him, “you’ll just be even more ready for the exam”

“*Anata*, I never said I would take it”

“I know, I know,” Kakashi moves his hands down Iruka’s neck and to his shoulders, massaging the knots and the sore muscles. The groan that he receives goes straight to Kakashi’s groin. He lets his hands drift lower. His fingers find a particularly large knot that has Iruka wincing. “Maa, sensei, you’re so tense back here”

“Ugh, I know. And it’s your fault”

“My fault?” Kakashi asks in amusement, “why is that, sensei?”

“You’re the one who talked me into the training regimen from hell,” Iruka grumbles, “so you have to take responsibility for it”

“I see,” Kakashi says, letting his fingers slip beneath Iruka’s jacket and graze against his warm skin, “and how do you propose I take responsibility for it?”

“That’s too easy,” Iruka murmurs, rolling his hips, “you have to figure out how to take responsibility”

“I have a few ideas,” Kakashi murmurs.

“IRUKA-SENSEI!”

Kakashi groans. Iruka twitches.

“How-?” he murmurs, scanning his wall.

“He gets past mine too,” Kakashi murmurs.

“Hello Rival,” Gai says, bursting into the living room seconds after they separate. “IRUKA-SENSEI! MIGHT I INTEREST YOU IN A CHALLENGE OF ENDURANCE THAT WILL GREATLY ASSIST WITH YOUR TRAINING ENDEAVORS?”

Iruka chokes and Kakashi can see the dread written in his features.

“Maa, Gai, I’m pretty sure I do a fairly good job of assisting Iruka with endurance training,” Kakashi leers. “In fact, we were just about to engage in a round”

“*Anata!*” Iruka smacks him in the shoulder, hard.

“Ow. Violence, sensei”

“Don’t say those things!”

“SUCH A YOUTHFUL DISPLAY OF LOVE,” Gai holds his forearm to his eyes, “I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD SEE THE DAY”

Iruka groans, burying his face in his hands. Kakashi pats the back of his head.

“RIVAL! PERHAPS YOU WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THE CHALLENGE TOO!”

“Maa, Gai, Iruka and I already have plans for a different sort of challenge”

“Shut up,” Iruka hisses. Kakashi winks.

“AN EXISTING CHALLENGE!” Gai grins, “PERHAPS I CAN PARTICI-”

Iruka chokes, face redder than a tomato. Kakashi grimaces. He forgets

some things go right over Gai's head.

"TENZO!" Kakashi calls before Iruka spontaneously combusts.

"Senpai"

"Please, come collect your…" Kakashi gestures in Gai's direction, "before he tries to join us in…ow," Kakashi grimaces as Iruka pinches him hard. "Domestic violence doesn't become you, sensei"

"My beloved," Gai's voice softens at the sight of Tenzo, "my rival and his youthful love have an existing challenge of endurance. Perhaps you would be interested in joining us!"

"Oh my god," Iruka whispers, face a deep shade of burgundy as he buries it in his hands.

"Maa, sensei," Kakashi bites back his laughter, "who knows, it might be fun…"

"Senpai, I don't know what's going on here, but you're making Iruka-san uncomfortable"

Iruka sends a shaky, grateful smile in Tenzo's direction.

"Fine," Kakashi says, "perhaps you and Gai can engage in a challenge of endurance on your own then"

"…now I really don't want to know," Tenzo says flatly.

"You have permission to go off-duty, as long as you take Gai somewhere not here"

"RIVAL! HOW THOUGHTFUL OF YOU! ALLOWING ME TO SPEND TIME WITH MY BELOVED! TRULY THE YOUTHFUL VIGOR OF LOVE HAS-"

"We can't get to the youthful vigor part with you standing there," Kakashi muses. Iruka smacks him on the shoulder. "Maa, sensei, unless you want to have them join our challenge of endurance"

"Hatake Kakashi, I swear, if you don't behave I will make you sleep on the couch"

Right. Kakashi can tell based on Iruka's tone that he's pushing a little too far here. For as open-minded as Iruka can be in the bedroom, and Kakashi is pretty sure Iruka has put Icha Icha to shame multiple times,

he's surprisingly shy about discussing these things.

"Sorry," Kakashi says quietly, brushing his fingers down the back of Iruka's hand, "I'll tone it down"

"Thank you," Iruka tangles their fingers together and squeezes. Kakashi returns the squeeze.

Kakashi notices Gai has stopped his speech. He's watching them with a fond expression.

"Rival," he begins in a more normal volume, "I truly am happy for you and Iruka-sensei. I can see it in the eyes of both of you how much you love each other. I'm glad you've found someone to spend the Springtime of Your Youth with"

"Maa," Kakashi scratches the back of his head, "you know what? So am I"

"A new challenge then!" Gai grins.

"Gai…" Kakashi begins, not hiding his exasperation.

"Dinner! You and Iruka-sensei must come over for dinner! I will challenge myself to cook a full four-course meal!"

"I'm good with that challenge," Iruka says, looking up at Kakashi questioningly.

"Why not," Kakashi shrugs. There's worse things than having dinner with his kohai and his best friend and his partner.

Tenzo approaches Gai and carefully takes his hand. Kakashi can just imagine the adorably bashful expression on his kohai's face.

"Cute," he murmurs. Iruka nods his agreement.

"I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable," Kakashi says quietly when they're finally alone. Iruka rests his head against Kakashi's shoulder.

"It's fine. I know I can be a little bit of a prude when it comes to these things…"

"You are many things," Kakashi laughs, "but a prude is not one"

Iruka scratches at his scar.

“I’m going to have to strengthen my wards,” Iruka sighs.

“Maa, I don’t think that will help,” Kakashi sighs, “I spent years trying to figure out how to keep Gai out. At one point, even I couldn’t get into my own damn apartment but he still managed it”

“Hm,” Iruka muses, Kakashi can tell his attention is slipping away to wherever it goes when he begins to think about seals and barriers.

“Ah no,” Kakashi’s hands slip under his jacket, discarding it with ease. “We still have our endurance training,” he pulls Iruka close, “maybe a little bit of flexibility training too”

Iruka huffs a laugh and allows Kakashi to back him up into the bedroom. He pushes him onto the bed and pins his hands above his head.

Kakashi tugs down his mask and kisses Iruka long and slow. Iruka responds to the kiss enthusiastically. It doesn’t take long for their clothes to be discarded on the floor and Kakashi is slowly pushing into Iruka, tan legs thrown over his shoulders as the younger man practically arches his back off the bed.

If there’s one thing to be said, it’s that Iruka definitely doesn’t need flexibility training but Kakashi definitely makes sure that his endurance and stamina levels are up to par.

The next day Kakashi leaves his office to go find where Iruka is sparring with Anko.

The way Iruka moves is fluid and graceful and Kakashi feels his libido spike as he sees Iruka bend backwards before doing something creative with a barrier seal and exploding tags that singes the edges of Anko’s coat as she leaps out of the way with a crow.

Kakashi watches as Iruka dodges Anko’s blows, sticking his tongue out at her as he strikes back and she evades.

Iruka and Anko fight dirty. It’s unpredictable and fascinating to watch. Anko strikes out for a groin shot that has Kakashi wincing. Iruka evades it and grabs her hair, whirling her around and throwing her towards a tree. She spins, bounces off and launches back at Iruka.

Snakes fly towards him and Iruka dodges, slamming his hand against the ground.

It's clear the two of them are familiar with each others' fighting styles based on how they evade and counter each other.

"I'm not falling for that one again, Ru-kins!" Anko crows, setting off the trap that Kakashi thinks may be a little too obvious with a snake. "You got me with that one years ago!"

"Scared of a little glitter An-chan?" Iruka laughs as Anko lands. He makes a hand sign and Anko swears, trying to move her feet.

"What-?"

"New seal," Iruka lands in front of her with a smile, pecking a kiss to her cheek. "Spiderweb. You're not getting out of this one"

She holds up a hand but a barrier shimmers into view around her.

"Fine, you win," Anko whines.

Kakashi grins, sliding from his perch in the tree.

"Impressive"

"*Anata.* What are you doing here?" Iruka tilts his head.

"I came by to see how you were doing," Kakashi presses a masked kiss to his temple. Anko squeals. "I'm impressed. You'll make it to tokubetsu with no problem, you could even make it to jonin if you wanted to"

"*Anata,*" Iruka huffs, "I don't know if I'm going to do it"

Kakashi sighs softly, feeling a flicker of mild irritation, "why not? You're more than prepared for it"

"He's right, you know," Anko says, "you're really good, Ru, you could easily make tokujo and I think you should. We all do. It'd be good for you"

Iruka looks dubious but doesn't say anything.

That night they're laying in bed together and Kakashi is running his hand down Iruka's arm, wondering how he can convince the younger man to take the test.

"I'm sorry"

“Hm?” Kakashi asks.

“I’m sorry I’m being so stubborn about making the jump to tokujo”

“Why are you?” Kakashi asks. Iruka exhales and nestles closer.

“I don’t know. I really don’t. I just…I don’t think, it’s like, I’m not… I’m not good enough,” Iruka finally manages to get out. “What if I try it and I fail? Fail spectacularly?”

Kakashi wraps his arms around Iruka’s waist, pressing his face against his shoulder and squeezing him tight. He hates how deeply rooted Iruka’s self-esteem issues are.

“Listen to me,” he says softly, rolling Iruka to face him. “If I thought you would fail, if I thought you weren’t able to do it, I would not be pushing you to it. Do you think Anko would tell you to do something you’d fail at? Or your friends, Izumo and Kotetsu? Would they honestly set you up to fail? Do you think I would set you up to fail?”

“Of course not,” Iruka says, resting their foreheads together. “But what if I freeze up?”

“You’re not sixteen anymore,” Kakashi says, “you have life experience, field experience, you’ve even been training for it.

Iruka closes his eyes and Kakashi knows he’s fighting an internal battle with himself.

“Alright,” Iruka says softly, “I’ll do it”

Kakashi feels a thrill of satisfaction and happiness in his chest at Iruka’s decision. He kisses him.

“You’ll pass,” Kakashi murmurs, “I know it”

“I wish I had more faith in myself,” Iruka laughs, burying his face against Kakashi’s shoulder.

“That’s okay,” Kakashi squeezes him, “I can have faith in you instead”

Iruka laughs again and Kakashi smiles.

He really does love Iruka.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I’m exhausted,” Kakashi groans. “I don’t know how you do it all day. With twenty of them!”

“Well, they’re generally a little older,” Iruka glances at the futon where Boruto and his little sister are sprawled out on.

Kakashi had been relieved when Boruto had become a little older.

But two of them…

Even Iruka is looking a little frazzled.

They, meaning Iruka, had offered to watch Boruto and Himawari for the weekend so Naruto and Hinata could go to an onsen for their anniversary.

Kakashi loves the two brats almost as much as he loves Iruka, but a whole weekend of wrangling them has him wishing Hinata and Naruto would come back sooner.

Fortunately, Boruto and Himawari seem to sleep the rest of the afternoon and before long, the front door is being opened.

“We’re back, dattebayo!”

“Mama! Papa!”

Kakashi watches the little hellions race through the apartment with no small amount of relief. Iruka follows shortly after and begins to reign in the chaos.

“Go get your things packed up, okay?” Iruka ushers the kids into the guest bedroom and turns to Hinata and Naruto. “How was your trip?”

“It was awesome!” Naruto grins, kissing Hinata on the temple. “It was nice to get away for awhile”

“Thank you for watching the kids,” Hinata bows.

Iruka waves her off with a warm smile. “It was no problem. They’re a

joy to have around. Boruto definitely takes after his father," Iruka teases. Naruto looks sheepish and Hinata giggles. "Have a seat, I'll make tea"

That's when Naruto seems to notice Kakashi because his eyes widen. "Kaka-sensei??"

"Yo," Kakashi throws up a peace sign.

"You sure spend a lot of time here, Kakashi-sensei," Naruto says.

"I live here"

"Eeeeh!?" Naruto says, "since when!?"

"Hm, about six years now"

"How did I not know?" Naruto looks a little put out, "I didn't know you and Iruka-sensei were close enough to live together"

Hinata blinks twice and realization begins to trickle across her face.

"Yup," Kakashi grins underneath his mask.

"Wait, but where do you sleep?" Naruto furrows his brows. Kakashi points to the bedroom. "But Iruka-sensei sleeps there!"

"Yup"

Hinata's cheeks turn pink and exasperation crosses her features before she buries her face in her hands.

"Why don't you live in the Hokage residence?"

"Maa, it's too big and too empty," Kakashi shrugs, "besides, Iruka's more comfortable here"

"Of course he is! This is his apartment! But this isn't about Iruka-sensei"

"It's not?"

"You never answer my questions Kaka-sensei!" Naruto scrambles to his feet. "Iruka-sensei!" he disappears into the kitchen.

"Kakashi-sensei…" Hinata says in a mildly chastising, mildly despairing tone that is oddly familiar, "he doesn't understand"

“And you do?” Kakashi quirks an eyebrow.

“You and Iruka-sensei…” she trails off, “how long?”

“Years,” Kakashi hums, “ten, to be exact”

“T-ten?” Hinata’s eyes widen.

“A little before your Chunin Exams”

“But-”

“We would actually appreciate it if you would keep this a secret,” Kakashi says, holding a finger to his lips, “at least until after my retirement. I can’t say I love the idea of everyone knowing our personal lives, especially not when I’m Hokage”

“Understood,” Hinata nods, “I’m really happy for you and Iruka-sensei,” she smiles shyly, “Naruto has been worried about the two of you being lonely because you don’t have anyone”

Kakashi huffs a laugh. “No concerns there,” he says, “in fact, don’t tell Naruto this since I’m sure Iruka would rather say something himself, but he’s going to ask Naruto to be his best man”

“You’re getting married!?” Hinata gasps.

“Once I’m retired,” Kakashi nods, “it’ll be small. Neither Iruka nor I are one for big events like that. Perhaps just a few of his former students and a couple of our friends. Otherwise the whole village will show up, knowing Iruka. Honestly, we’d be more than happy just filing the necessary paperwork. But that would probably hurt some feelings”

“Con-”

“EEEEH!?” Naruto’s screech shakes the apartment, *“MARRIED!?”*

Kakashi scratches the back of his head as Hinata giggles.

“I guess he found out,” Kakashi raises an eyebrow.

Hinata giggles again.

Naruto storms back into the living room, hand clasped around Iruka’s wrist. Iruka looks a little guilty.

“This is a joke right?” Naruto’s gaze flicks between them, “you’re not really getting married, right dattebayo?”

“We’re really getting married,” Kakashi confirms, “but after my retirement”

“I-Hinata, *help*,” Naruto looks lost for a moment. Hinata gently takes his hand. “I didn’t even know they were dating dattebayo”

“Kakashi-sensei was just saying they’ve been together for ten years”

“Chunin Exams,” Kakashi grins. Iruka rolls his eyes. They argue regularly over the timeline of when they actually got together. Kakashi has decided to include their stint as friends with benefits, whereas Iruka claims it wasn’t until Naruto had left with Jiraiya that they were actually together.

“We’re trying to keep it quiet though,” Iruka admits.

“I’ll say,” Naruto stares, wide-eyed, “does anyone else know?”

“Anko, Captain Yamato and Gai,” Iruka ticks off.

“*Ten years*, Iruka-sensei,” Naruto stares, eyes wide.

Iruka’s soft *oh* makes Kakashi blink because apparently Iruka has realized something Kakashi has not.

“I know we should have said something sooner,” Iruka says gently, “but it never seemed like a good time. First it was crisis after crisis, and then Kakashi became Hokage and we figured it’d be better to keep it quiet, and then everyone was getting married and pregnant and children, and we just figured it would be easier to not say anything just yet. We never really went out of our way to hide it though, did we?” Iruka looks at Kakashi.

Kakashi shrugs. “I mean, we weren’t making out in the middle of Hokage Tower, but I also wasn’t pulling an Asuma and hiding whenever someone saw us out together. We’ve been living together for six years. Though I do shake off my ANBU, but that’s more for entertainment than actually hiding anything”

Naruto scrubs a hand across his hair.

“We are trying to keep it rather quiet though,” Iruka says, “at least until Kakashi is retired”

Naruto blinks.

“This is insane…” he murmurs, “you’re really not joking, dattebayo?”

“Really not joking,” Iruka says gently, “and when we do get married, I want you to be my best man”

Large blue eyes get larger and begin to water at the edges.

“Iruka-sensei!” Naruto launches himself at Iruka like he’s a twelve-year old again. Except he’s grown taller than his former teacher-slash-father figure and he sends Iruka stumbling back with a laugh. Kakashi catches him, keeping him upright. “Of course I will dattebayo!” Naruto wails.

Hinata giggles into her hand and smiles softly.

Kakashi shakes his head at what is slowly becoming a familiar feeling of family that warms his entire being.

Chapter End Notes

well, that’s two more down lol

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

sorry for the hiatus lol

The day Kakashi finally passes the mantle of Hokage to Naruto, all he can feel is relief. Well, relief and pride that Naruto has come so far, that the loudmouthed and bratty blonde has achieved his lifelong dream.

Kakashi catches sight of Iruka practically bawling his eyes out and he can't help the affection that squeezes his chest.

Now that he's retired he only has one goal: finally marry Iruka.

Kakashi thinks back on their relationship. They had gone from hating each other, to sleeping together but still hating each other, to becoming tentative friends after Naruto left to train with Jiraiya, to Kakashi falling into what he thought was one-sided love.

Now here they are watching their mutual student and surrogate son, and quite possibly the reason they're even together, achieve his lifelong dream.

He leaves to track down the scarred man after everything is said and done.

Iruka is walking back to the Academy when Kakashi catches his hand, pulling him behind a tree. While he'd be fine announcing to Konoha that Iruka is his, today is supposed to be about Naruto. Kakashi and Iruka both hate the spotlight anyway.

"Maa, sensei, now that I'm retired I have all the time in the world," Kakashi wraps his arms around Iruka's waist and presses him back against the tree.

Iruka laughs quietly, bringing his hands up to gently card through Kakashi's silver hair. Iruka himself has a few hairs greying slightly at his temple. Not many, but every now and then Kakashi will catch sight of the two or three that are there and idly wonder what Iruka would look like with white hair.

The first time he wondered that was when he realized he wanted to be with Iruka until they were old and their hair was white and they were

more wrinkle than skin.

Kakashi had never expected to make it this far in life. He hadn't expected to live to be an adult much less to be forty-two. He hadn't expected to be with someone he loves, someone who loves him, for fifteen years.

Not for the first time does Kakashi wonder what Iruka sees in him that has kept him around so long.

"Anata?" Iruka is frowning slightly, "what's wrong?"

"Nothing," Kakashi murmurs, pressing their foreheads together, "just thinking about how lucky I am to be here"

Iruka's expression softens. "It's not luck, anata," he tugs Kakashi's mask down, stands on his toes and kisses him long and slow and sweet. "It's skill"

Kakashi sighs quietly as he kisses Iruka back.

"Tomorrow"

"Hm?"

"We'll get married tomorrow"

Brown eyes widen, "I-isn't that a bit soon…?"

Doubt floods Kakashi's bones, replacing the marrow. "Is it? Do you not want to?"

"No, no," Iruka shakes his head quickly to reassure him, "I absolutely want to marry you. I just…isn't it a bit last minute? What if our precious people can't make it? We want Anko, Gai, Tenzo, Naruto and Hinata…Naruto just became Hokage. Do you really think he can just take off half a day to see us get married?"

"I think he'd take off a whole week," Kakashi says, "and if you got married without him there, you would probably break his heart"

"Sasuke and Sakura?" Iruka tilts his head. Kakashi nods. "And I suppose I should tell Kotetsu and Izumo," Iruka sighs.

Kakashi huffs a laugh but nods.

Kakashi makes an appointment at the record's office first thing the

next day. Unfortunately, they have to wait until the day after for an open slot.

He knows neither he nor Iruka want anything flashy or even an actual wedding. They've talked about it before. Maybe one day. But getting married as the former Hokage would come with an annoying amount of pomp and circumstance if they were to hold an actual wedding.

They'll be happy just filing paperwork and going to a nice dinner with their precious people.

It's part of why Kakashi loves Iruka so much. If Iruka had wanted a big wedding with half the village in attendance, Kakashi would make it happen and suffer through it with just a bit of complaining, but he's infinitely grateful that they're on the same page.

Iruka is, more than anything, practical and frugal and, for all of his outgoing friendliness, prefers to celebrate things with just his precious people.

Kakashi doesn't like big events where he's the center of attention. A wedding as the former Hokage sounds like something out of one of his worst nightmares, right up there with the one where Kakashi is stuck in a room and can only get out by completing the endless mountains of paperwork leading to the door.

The next day dawns faster than he had expected and Kakashi is irrationally nervous. He's more nervous now than he's ever been on even his most dangerous S-ranked missions.

"Senpai," Tenzo blinks, "breathe"

"Right," Kakashi says, crinkling his eyes. "I can do this. It's really nothing new"

Except…it is.

They've been together long enough that the paperwork combining their lives was basically already done. They were listed as each others' emergency contacts and Iruka was listed as his next of kin, Kakashi had written both Iruka and Naruto into his will, they had both been added to his summons contract. He knows Iruka had done something similar on his end, although Naruto was always going to be the man's next of kin no matter what and Kakashi didn't begrudge that fact.

Realistically, the only thing that will change is that they're, well,

husbands.

But there's still something different about the fact that they're getting married that makes nerves build in Kakashi's chest as he dresses in his nicest outfit and follows Gai and Tenzo out of their apartment.

Their friends had made them stay apart the previous night, claiming a Western superstition of bad luck.

Sasuke and Sakura are already at the record's office when he sees Iruka approaching with Naruto, Hinata, Anko, Kotetsu and Izumo.

Gods, Iruka is stunning in his teal and black haori, hair swept into a half-bun.

All the nerves building up in Kakashi's chest dissipate at the sight of him and he wonders what he was nervous for in the beginning.

Sakura's eyes are suspiciously damp as she embraces them both in back-breaking hugs. Sasuke clamps a hand on Kakashi's shoulders before allowing Iruka to ruffle his hair.

It's a quiet affair. Naruto's eyes are shining with tears as hugs them both in an embrace that rivals Sakura's.

The records office clerk looks like someone bowled her over with a stun jutsu when the Hokage, former Hokage, and Academy Vice Principal enter. The officiant seems to take the entire thing in stride and shortly after they sign the papers, the officiant declares them married.

They grasp hands and Kakashi sends a thin rope of chakra encircling Iruka's ring finger. He shivers slightly as Iruka does it back. He watches Iruka's soft blue chakra circling his ring finger happily and he can't help but kiss him.

"I can't believe we did it," Iruka whispers, staring at Kakashi's white chakra encircling his own finger. Before disappearing.

"We did it," Kakashi whispers as he leans down, quickly tugs down his mask and kisses Iruka softly.

"Damnit," Naruto sighs, "I was convinced he had cod roe lips"

"Dobe!" Sasuke smacks him on the back of the head and Sakura huffs. Hinata has a stern look on her face and Naruto ducks his head, cowed

by his wife's expression.

Iruka hides his smile behind his hand and Kakashi feels his heart swell with nearly overwhelming love and affection for the man in front of him.

"Can we get married again?" Kakashi asks. Iruka sends him a confused look. "I want to do nothing more than marry you again and again the rest of our lives"

Iruka blushes as Sakura makes a cooing sound and Gai's sobs are absurdly loud. Kotetsu is sobbing quieter into Izumo's shoulder.

"SO HIP AND ROMANTIC, RIVAL!"

Kakashi sighs to himself and shakes his head.

Iruka laughs quietly as the group make their way to Ichiraku's.

When deciding on where to go after, they didn't have a single doubt.

Sure, most people would go somewhere special, but to them, it didn't get more special than Ichiraku's.

Teuchi and Ayame had delightedly closed down the restaurant for their group.

As Kakashi wraps his arm around Iruka's waist and watches Naruto challenge Sasuke to a ramen eating competition (that Hinata ultimately wins) he thinks that he couldn't ask for a better wedding.

Based on Iruka's helplessly fond smile, he thinks his new husband would agree.

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

double update to apologize for the hiatus

Kakashi is intrigued.

He had decided to take a break and walk the path next to the river only to catch sight of a familiar ponytail. He's halfway over to tug it and pester the principal when he realizes Iruka is not alone.

Aburame Shino is sitting stiffly on the grass next to Iruka.

He knows that Shino had been one of Iruka's students. But he didn't think that Iruka spent a significant amount of time with him.

The two men are sitting at the edge of the river and Kakashi is curious about what they're talking about. Had it been anyone other than a former student, and had they still been in the earlier stages of their relationship, Kakashi would probably be jealous. But after getting married and realizing Iruka wasn't going anywhere, he had relaxed a lot. This, however, this just piqued his inherent curiosity.

He knows the bug user just passed his teacher's exam and was assigned the class with Boruto. Kakashi did not envy the Aburame kid. But he also saw parallels with Iruka's first class with Naruto.

"…it's alright," Iruka rests a hand on the bug user's shoulder. "I wouldn't expect you to know right away, Shino-kun"

"Am I doing it wrong?" Shino asks, "why can't I reach them?"

"I've been teaching for a long time," Iruka says, leaning back on his hands. "And even to this day I find myself doubting my ability to be a good teacher"

"Everyone loves you though, Iruka-sensei"

Kakashi nods his head in silent agreement.

Iruka laughs, scratching at his scar. "I don't know about that," he sighs, "Shino-kun, what made you decide to be a teacher in the first place?"

The Aburame looks at the sky.

“I was talking to those kids, Tsukune, Mibuna, Sansho, and they were so…they were so interested in learning. They even expressed interest in being Insect Users. That’s not usually the reaction I get. Just seeing them be able to change their mind about something because they learned about it it was really amazing”

“You do have a difficult class this year,” Iruka rests a hand on his shoulder, “but let me tell you something, my first class was yours. I’m sure you remember what an…adventure that was. But I survived it”

“How?”

“I got advice from someone I respected and cared about that helped me clear the cobwebs from my mind and open my heart”

“You have a special person, Iruka-sensei?” Shino sounds as surprised as Shino can sound.

“I do”

Kakashi feels like all the oxygen has been sucked from his lungs at Iruka’s words. Logically, he knows it’s true, but hearing Iruka say it out loud and to someone else makes his heart begin to leap in his chest.

“I don’t,” Shino draws his knees up to his chest in an unusually insecure position for the usually stoic Aburame, but Kakashi has seen many of Iruka’s former students revert to behavior that they probably displayed as pre-genin in front of him. “All my friends, they’ve found someone…even Kiba”

“I see,” Iruka hums, “you’re lonely?”

Shino shrugs. “There is someone I’m interested in but, I’m unsure how to approach her. I’m not good at these things”

Kakashi watches Iruka sigh before he wraps his arm around his former student.

“You’re a special type of person, Shino-kun,” Iruka says, “don’t tell anyone, but you were one of my favorite students”

“Teachers shouldn’t have favorites,” Shino says, but Kakashi can see the pink flush on his ears.

“Oh, but we all do,” Iruka laughs, letting go of Shino and resting a hand on his head, “I can’t give you the best advice for speaking to the person who has caught your interest, but as far as teaching your class goes, don’t fret too badly. It gets easier over time and who knows? Maybe in a few years you’ll have my position. Principal Aburame Shino has a nice ring to it, doesn’t it?”

“You really think I could?” Shino asks.

“I do,” Iruka says confidently. “Because the fact you’re worrying so much over your ability to teach these kids means you care and caring is the most important trait in a teacher”

Shino seems to be thinking over Iruka’s words. Kakashi resists the urge to interrupt and kiss Iruka senseless because even now, two decades later, his care for his students is obvious.

The two men exchange a few more words before Iruka is patting Shino on the shoulder and bidding him farewell.

Kakashi hides in a tree, waiting to ambush Iruka when he walks by.

“You’re a good teacher,” he says, landing soundlessly next to Iruka who jumps.

“Wha-? Anata! Were you eavesdropping!?”

“I-” Kakashi scratches the back of his head, “I intended to surprise you but then I realized you were talking and then it was just awkward and I couldn’t exactly just leave so-”

Iruka sighs and shakes his head. “You’re always like this,” he complains. “So I take it you heard everything?”

“You told him you had a special person”

“Because I do”

“Maa, and who might that be?”

Iruka gives him a look that reads *how the hell can you be this dumb?* and Kakashi grins.

“Do I even bother to deign that question with an answer, husband?” Iruka rolls his eyes.

“It’s an order from your former Hokage,” Kakashi says in mock

sternness, slipping two fingers beneath Iruka's chin and holding it in place.

"Oh, well then, *Rokudaime-sama*," Kakashi bites the inside of his lip at the tone that is just this side of teasing, "my special person is-"

"Kakashi-sama?"

Kakashi quietly curses. Iruka blushes.

"Ah, stop with the sama, please, I'm no longer Hokage," he says instinctively as he looks at Shino, who is glancing between the two of them curiously.

"Oh," Shino says quietly. "Iruka-sensei…is he…?"

"Yes"

"I-" Shino looks like someone smacked him in the face with a fish and Iruka sighs.

"Aburame Shino!" he uses his teacher voice which seems to trigger some kind of Pavlovian response in his former student.

"Yes sensei!" Shino says before tilting his head. "I mean-"

Iruka stares at him for a very long moment before he starts laughing. Kakashi knows his eyes are all but physically heart-shaped as he watches the way Iruka's face lights up and he finds he doesn't care. "I'm sorry, Shino-sensei," Iruka wipes his eyes, "I couldn't resist"

"Iruka-sensei…" the insect user wilts. "That was mean"

"Maa, see? I'm not the only one who thinks that, sensei," Kakashi teases.

"Behave yourself!" Iruka bops him lightly over the head, "really, anata, please have some dignity"

"As you wish, sensei," Kakashi bows. Iruka huffs, hands in his hips.

Shino is watching them like a spectator at a ping pong match.

"How…how did I not see this before?" he says, looking defeated.

"Don't fret, Shino-sensei," Iruka rests a hand on his shoulder, "I don't think anyone has figured it out on their own in the last ten or so

years”

“T-ten…?”

“Sensei, you’re really forgetting how many years it’s been? It’s been fifteen!”

“It feels like an eternity with you sometimes”

“F-Fifteen…?” Kakashi is amused to have front row seats to watching someone’s entire worldview shatter. Iruka actually looks a little concerned. “Wait…when…were…was it when I was a student?”

“No,” Iruka shakes his head.

“Not long after though!” Kakashi says cheerfully, “ah, the Chunin Exam days, where we-”

“Hatake Kakashi,” Iruka glares and Kakashi knows where the line is. He backs off.

“We fought pretty badly,” Kakashi finishes. “And I think it was after that that we began dating. Except Iruka-sensei here didn’t realize we were together…”

“Because you never said anything or expressed any interest in being…” Iruka gestures, “more”

“Because I thought you barely tolerated me. Anyways, it took about two and a half years for Iruka to realize we were together the entire time”

Shino presses two fingers to his forehead.

“More than fifteen years and no one knew? A village full of shinobi and not one of us figured it out?”

“Maa, Tenzo knew,” Kakashi shrugs, “but, basically. Oh and Anko. Naruto, Hinata, Sasuke, Sakura and Gai. They were at our wedding”

“W-Wedding!?” Shino’s voice hits a pitch that hurts Kakashi’s sensitive ears.

“Yeah, we got officially married the very first day of my retirement,” Kakashi salutes. “Though it’s been unofficial pretty much since, hm, since I moved in”

“You slowly brought all your things over to my apartment and didn’t expect me to notice!” Iruka huffs.

“I’ve apologized!” Kakashi winces.

“Why did you keep it quiet?” Shino asks, clearly curious.

“He wanted to,” they say at the same time. Iruka and Kakashi exchange a glance and Kakashi has the sneaking suspicion he had made the absolutely wrong assumption.

“I thought you didn’t want to tell anyone,” Kakashi says.

“Me?” Iruka blinks, “I thought it was you who didn’t want to tell anyone”

“No way,” Kakashi holds up his hands, “I was more than prepared to shout it at the top of my lungs while running around Konoha two-thousand times on my hands in a green jumpsuit”

“If you ever bring home a green jumpsuit, I will burn it”

“Don’t worry,” Kakashi shudders at the thought. “But if you didn’t care about keeping it quiet, and I didn’t care about keeping it quiet…”

“We wasted so much time keeping it quiet,” Iruka confirms, looking equally bemused.

Shino stares at the two of them for a very long time, clearly trying to process everything. Kakashi really wishes he could see his eyes.

“Don’t think too hard about it,” Kakashi claps him on the shoulder, “makes more sense that way”

Shino nods as if he’s not entirely certain but can’t quite argue.

“It’s late, sensei,” Kakashi holds out his hand to Iruka, “we should go home”

Iruka hesitates, glancing between Kakashi’s hand and Shino before sliding his fingers between Kakashi’s.

“I’ll see you on Monday, Shino-sensei,” Iruka says, “and think about what I told you”

“I…I will see you,” Shino says, bowing, “Kakashi-sama, Iruka-sensei”

Kakashi sighs at the sama but decides he's too tired to argue.

"So," Kakashi hums, "how long do you think it'll be before Shino says something?"

"He won't," Iruka laughs, "he's not the gossiping sort"

"Did we really waste all those years hiding this?"

"Did we really take great effort to hide this?" Iruka counters, "it's not like we were channeling Asuma and Kurenai in their denial. We would go places together and spend time with each other. We just never… said anything. And you weren't exactly subtle considering the fact we sat on this very hill with your head in my lap, at the very least"

"I suppose," Kakashi looks up at the night sky. "But if I had known you didn't care who knew, I would have," he pauses, "actually, I probably wouldn't have done anything different"

"Exactly. It's not our fault everyone in this village is terrible at looking underneath the underneath"

Kakashi grins beneath his mask as he squeezes Iruka's hand.

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

> we're getting pretty firmly into Boruto territory from here on out now. apologies in advance if you're reading this but have never watched the show (in all fairness I only watched the bits involving Kakashi and also Iruka)

"Who-?" Kakashi blinks at the kid in the mask who is now wearing his forehead protector tilted over one eye.

"Taketori Hoki," Iruka says, amused, as he approaches Kakashi through the trees, "you have a fan, Kakashi"

"He's so cute," Kakashi laughs, staring at the masked preteen as he walks into a tree, "it's hard to believe someone like me could inspire someone like that"

"Of course you would," Iruka shakes his head.

The graduation exam was entertaining. Even if Iruka had lectured him soundly, much to the amusement of Anko and Konohamaru.

He knew he had gone overboard though, so he meekly accepted Iruka's ire knowing it was better to let him get it out. He'd make it up to him later.

He watches as the kid readjusts his forehead protector and tugs up his mask more before fumbling his way in a straight line.

Then he realizes something.

"Oh no"

"What?" Iruka looks concerned.

"Gai had Mini Gai…" Kakashi stares in horror at the kid trying to walk around with halved visibility. "How-"

"The two of you really are Eternal Rivals now," Iruka snickers, "emphasis on the Eternal"

"Sensei, you're a cruel man"

Iruka smiles wickedly. “As long as you don’t start waxing poetic about youth in front of this kid, you’ll be fine”

“A Mini Kakashi is so much worse than a Mini Gai,” Kakashi sighs. “I was such a pain in the ass at his age”

“You’re still a pain in the ass, anata,” Iruka shakes his head. Kakashi leers.

“Only if it’s your ass, sensei,” he says quietly. Iruka chokes.

“Hatake Kakashi!” he snaps. Some of the newly minted genin turn to stare at them.

“Rokudaime-sama is being yelled at,” one of them whispers.

“Principal Umino is scary when he’s mad!”

“He’ll even yell at Rokudaime-sama?”

“We will continue this conversation later,” Iruka hisses. Kakashi lowers his head.

“Sorry, Principal Umino,” he bows to him and the kids gasp and begin chattering, “I won’t do it again”

“See that you don’t,” Iruka says, cheeks burning red and eyes promising retribution.

The new genin are staring at their principal with a new level of respect and not the slightest hint of fear as Shino ushers them away.

“It’s a wonder no one figured it out,” Anko approaches them once it’s just them, “the two of you are as subtle as a sledgehammer”

“You didn’t figure it out either, An-chan,” Iruka says the nickname with terrifying sweetness, “I had to tell you so you wouldn’t stake out my apartment and terrorize my neighbors!”

“But I would have if I had staked out your apartment”

Iruka sighs and shakes his head.

Despite Iruka’s teasing about Mini Kakashi, and Kakashi’s own fear that Gai will find out and rope the kid into a weird challenge, Kakashi doesn’t really think much about his miniature after that day.

Being retired Hokage isn't exactly a piece of cake either. He's less busy than he was as active Hokage, but he's still got a fair amount of tasks to do. And challenges with Gai. And generally being a nuisance to Iruka. He's run a few missions and even decided to try his hand at taking over the Icha Icha series. Iruka has been less than impressed with his literary works and almost had Sakura come over to give him an anatomy lesson. It's actually a pretty nice existence. He had run a long mission out of Konoha and had found himself increasingly homesick, especially since the boy he found himself teaching reminded him a bit of Naruto.

He's now become a regular fixture in Iruka's office, commandeering one of the couches and ignoring Iruka's annoyed muttering about lazy Rokudaimes and conscripting him into helping with his paperwork.

Kakashi brings him lunch which cuts back on a lot of the muttering.

He doesn't think about his Mini Me until everyone in the village is running frantic over several bomb threats and he decides to not get involved. There's plenty of talented, younger shinobi who's joints don't ache with injuries of missions past and who possess the energy of youth.

He shudders at the words, but they're not exactly wrong.

Either way, Iruka is locked in meetings all day so he decides to see if there's anything not bomb-related for him to do.

Sai is the only one there and Kakashi glances around.

"A complaint?" Kakashi recognizes his Mini Me. "I have some time"

And it's been awhile since he's gone out as Sukea.

Kakashi makes his way to the post office. It'll be interesting to see his miniature now that he's probably got some field training under his belt. At the very least, Kakashi hopes the kid hasn't wrecked his vision too terribly.

He hears the chaos before he sees it. A kid shouting, seconds before packages land in front of him.

Well. He can understand why these kids have complaints against them.

He watches the three of them argue between themselves. The girl and

the taller boy walk off and Kakashi's miniature, Kakashi is still thoroughly entertained and more than the slightest bit charmed, curses in frustration.

"Got a minute?" Kakashi approaches. A large blue eye turns to look at him and he wonders if he was ever that small. Geez this kid looks so incredibly young and squishy.

"Hey, aren't you that guy who was conducting career interviews during the graduation exams? The journalist, Sukea-san?"

Good recall. "I'm impressed that you remember," Kakashi says.

"I have a good memory," the kid's eye closes in a smile and Kakashi has a general sense of bemusement at what it must have been like to talk to him at one point. "What are you doing here?"

"Ah, Hokage-sama asked me to see how Team 25 is doing"

"I see"

The kid wilts and Kakashi is struck with the incredibly unusual urge to hug him. God, Iruka really is rubbing off on him.

"So would you mind talking to me?" he gentles his voice the way he's heard Iruka do countless times. Dealing with kids is not his strong point, but you don't date a teacher for roughly two decades and not pick up something.

They end up sitting on the steps and Kakashi tries to coax the story from the kid, but it doesn't seem like he's particularly open to talking. So Kakashi tries something else and mentions Hoki's appearance. If he may be fishing for compliments now, no one has to know but him. He tries his best not to blush as Hoki passionately rambles on about why he idolizes him and nearly slips up and reveals himself.

Damn this kid doesn't miss a beat.

"I want to become a perfect ninja like him," the boy looks so happy at the thought, "although it's kind of an overambitious goal"

Kakashi is uncomfortably reminded of Iruka's still terrible self-esteem issues and decides then and there that this kid is not going to fall into the same mire of self-doubt, second-guessing, and holding himself back that even after more than a decade Kakashi still hasn't managed to break him out of entirely.

So he gives the kid the best advice he can.

“Well then, you’ve got to pull your comrades together on this mission too. So what’s the problem?”

“You see, we kept messing up so now we’re only assigned to D-rank missions”

“Who’s your jonin in charge?”

Kakashi listens to the boy’s story in frustration. He remembers Iruka’s story about his second genin team falling into the same situation. Forgotten about and left to fend for themselves.

Except unlike Iruka’s genin team, who had an experienced genin like Iruka, these kids were all new graduates.

Even if he didn’t have Iruka’s story lingering in the back of his mind, he’d have still felt sorry for them.

How many other genin teams has this happened to before?

The kid is cute as hell as he stares up at Kakashi with a visibly distressed large blue eye. Kakashi resists the urge to ruffle his hair.

Boruto and Sarada rush in and he watches through the commotion about bombs and packages.

He approaches, hoping that Boruto will keep his identity a secret.

He listens as Boruto and Sarada explain their deductions and is rather impressed. When volunteering to check out Team 25, he hadn’t expected to be roped into the bomb situation. He had been hoping to avoid the bomb situation.

Kakashi watches as Hoki and his team wilt even further with every word that’s said, especially at the mention of other genin teams.

He wonders if this is how Iruka felt when he was a genin. The frustration of being left behind by everyone else for circumstances beyond his control.

As the puppet wielding girl bluntly picks apart the postmaster’s life, Kakashi watches with interest. What an intriguing team formation. Hoki and this girl, Hako, are both incredibly observant: one who can pick things out and one with an incredible memory. He wonders about their third teammate. He remembers the packages he was carrying.

Incredible strength?

He hears their bickering.

“We’re the only ones left out of this investigation! Aren’t you frustrated!?”

“I don’t think there’s anything we can do about it”

“Besides, what do you expect us to do in this situation? We can’t even see what’s in store for us. How can we give it everything we’ve got?”

“It’s all over if you give up on yourselves!”

“Optimism isn’t the answer to all our troubles!”

Clearly this trio of genin is struggling.

“Well, that was quite heated,” Kakashi says. The boy clearly hasn’t learned expression control yet because even with the mask on, Kakashi can read everything on his face and his body language.

And really, this kid is so easy to egg on. It reminds him a bit of Iruka during their younger years and he has to resist the urge to ruffle his hair yet again.

“Anyway,” he says faux dismissively in a way he knows would have riled Iruka up, “we’re all useful in our own way. You guys should just do your best in missions that suit-”

“I want to become a perfect ninja, just like the Rokudaime!” the kid explodes before wilting and really, his emotional outbursts and mood swings are so like Iruka, “yet, no matter how hard I try, Hako and Renga won’t do things the way I want”

Ah. Kakashi sighs to himself. And yet, how like Kakashi himself at that age.

“Perhaps that’s because you aren’t thinking about how they feel”

“Huh? That’s-”

“About those two,” Kakashi wants to draw more out of this kid because he’s forming a theory, “Hako’s pretty interesting. The way she figured out that clerk had a fight with his wife. The other one, Renga, has extraordinary strength”

He listens to Hoki talk about his teammates and it's very clear that he knows their skills, but not how to work with them. Really, it's unfair that these three ended up without any actual guidance. This kid is quick and good at piecing things together and Kakashi watches with mild amusement as his words sink in and Hoki makes connections. Even with the mask, he's so adorably expressive and Kakashi feels a certain kinship with him.

So he tells him about Obito. In a third person fashion.

"By focusing only on orders and rules, the Rokudaime put his comrades in danger and lost a friend," for some reason it's easier now to talk about, even obliquely, "he regretted it so much and he wanted to apologize, but the friend he wanted to say it to was no longer there," he remembers words Iruka once told him. "If you want to apologize, there's no time like the present, right?"

He lets his words sink in before turning to the kid. He wants to test this kid's intelligence a bit more.

"By the way, there's so many kinds of department store wrapping paper. I wonder how they knew which package was the bomb"

"I'm pretty sure the packages the department store actually wrapped have the store's sticker on it. But the wrapping on the package containing the bomb didn't have a sticker"

He watches as the visible eye widens and the kid gasps.

"What's the matter?"

"Once I see something, I never forget it"

Photographic memory. Kakashi studies the boy. Photographic memory, outstanding perception skills, above average physical strength…

This team really is being wasted.

"They were there among today's packages! Wrapped packages without a sticker. Three of them!"

Well, Kakashi certainly wasn't expecting that.

After they defuse the bomb, he watches as the trio begin to discuss the situation. This particular team is very smart. Very observant. Kakashi

feels the seed developing further.

Kakashi assigns them the task of going after the packages as a test of their ability to work together and he hops along the roof, following the trio to a train depot.

He does tense when they're unable to defuse the bomb and is ready to step in when the tall one, Renga, jumps onto a train and Hoki throws the bomb.

Interesting strategy.

He watches the boy's wall expand with fascination, shielding them from the explosion.

Definitely being wasted.

"I guess I didn't have to worry," Kakashi says from the roof, anticipating Hoki's reaction.

"R-Rokudaime Hokage-sama!? Why are you here!?" he thinks the kid is going to combust.

"Sukea contacted me and I rushed over," he says, as if he hadn't just been hiding behind a water tower and observing, "is everything okay?"

"Y-Yes!" the boy stands so straight Kakashi is worried he'll pop his spine. "We joined forces and managed somehow"

He watches as the kids apologize to each other and smiles to himself as he leaves them behind.

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kakashi can't help but think about the trio of genin. They had potential, incredible potential, and they were being wasted.

He remembers Iruka's story about his disastrous time as a genin and privately thinks that that is a big part of why Iruka's self-confidence is so incredibly low.

Returning to the Tower, he flips through their file. He vaguely recognizes the name of their jonin instructor and realizes the man is not a good fit for a team like this. He remembers Iruka telling him about his frustration at being assigned a jonin instructor who's primary skill was terribly at odds with his own.

A close combat, taijutsu specialist may work for Renga to some extent, but with kids like Hoki and Hako…

Skills like theirs are rare. Especially being so well-developed at their age. They need to be further nurtured.

Maybe if Iruka had had an effective jonin instructor who could have seen his particular blend of skills and trained him on infiltration and intelligence gathering, he would be in a very different position right now.

"Sai"

"Hm?"

"How do you feel about taking on a genin team?"

"Oh?"

"I want them trained for ANBU," he hands him their folders, "one has photographic memory, one has skills of perception to an extent I've rarely seen, and one has an unusual method of defense"

Sai flips through the folder and smiles.

"Of course, Rokudaime-sama"

Kakashi glances out the window and decides to find Iruka.

Of course after all these years, Iruka is easy to find.

He slides open the window to Iruka's office. The principal is sitting at his desk, reading through papers. He doesn't look up when Kakashi enters, merely flicking an eyebrow.

"You graduated some interesting students"

"Oh?" now Iruka does look up.

"Taketori Hoki…and his team"

Iruka smiles, amused, "ah, so you met him"

Kakashi drops down on the couch in a lazy sprawl.

"If we ever had a kid, I think it would be like him"

Iruka snorts. "Is that so?"

"Doesn't Mini Gai have a son now?" a thought dawns on Kakashi and he's not sure if he's horrified or entertained at the idea.

"I know you know his name, anata. But yes, he does. Metal"

"Metal…" Kakashi shakes his head in vaguely horrified amusement. "Can we put Baby Mini Gai and Hoki in a room together?"

"Anata!" Iruka bursts out laughing. "I swear, if you encourage another nonsense rivalry…"

Kakashi sits up, looking gleeful.

"Hoki does idolize me, after all. What better way than to give him his very own Eternal Rival in a green jumpsuit?"

Iruka groans at the idea before narrowing his eyes.

"And if you even think about introducing that boy to the Icha Icha Series…"

"Iruka, *love*, you're brilliant"

"HATAKE KAKASHI SO HELP ME I WILL DESTROY EVERY SINGLE ONE OF YOUR COPIES!" Iruka's shout shakes the building.

“Are they still at it?” he hears someone say from the hallways.

“It’s amazing, they’ve kept at it for so long”

“I thought Principal Umino and the Rokudaime were friends?”

“Nobody knows what those two are. When we were younger, there were endless bets going on about them”

Iruka rises to his feet to stop the gossipers but Kakashi catches his wrist, pulling him back against his chest and holds a finger to his soft lips, a mischievous twinkle in his eyes. Iruka looks exasperated, but doesn’t say anything.

“Their relationship is a complete mystery. Even when he was Rokudaime, before he retired, Iruka would chew him out. Kakashi-sama never got angry at him and they’d even go to Ichiraku’s together!”

“There was that time at the Chunin Exams”

“I heard Principal Umino punched him!” Kakashi squeezes Iruka, who covers his mouth to stifle his laughter.

“Nah, I heard the Sandaime kicked them out”

“After the Principal punched him”

“I guess if anyone would be brave enough to punch Rokudaime Hokage-sama, it would be Principal Umino. He’s terrifying”

The voices drift away.

“Did you hear that, Principal Umino?” Kakashi murmurs in his ear, delighting in the shudder he receives.

“I guess I should be grateful that my reputation is such that they think me bold enough to punch the former Hokage,” Iruka laughs.

“Ah, the Chunin Exams,” Kakashi grins, “imagine what they would think if they knew the truth about what happened after *that* particular argument”

He watches as Iruka’s whole face scalds red at the memory and he buries his face in his hands.

“I *will* kill you”

Kakashi presses a masked kiss to his cheek.

“I love you too,” he singsongs, skipping over to the window and hopping onto the ledge. He glances around and gets an idea before walking up the wall and standing on the overhang from the roof. “Be home tonight?”

“Hm?” Iruka looks at him, brow furrowing as he takes in Kakashi’s upside down position.

“I’m making dinner,” Kakashi grins, “so no sleeping at the Academy tonight”

“I do not sleep here”

“It’s come close a couple times”

“Just because you got to retire…”

“You’d go crazy if you retired, Principal Umino,” Kakashi laughs. “Come here”

Iruka curiously makes his way to the open window. Kakashi points to his masked lips and Iruka rolls his eyes fondly.

“We’re too old for this shit, anata”

“That’s not a no I’m hearing, sensei”

Iruka sighs and kisses his masked lips quickly.

“Maa, sensei, I’m sure you can do better than that,” Kakashi goads cheekily. Iruka huffs and tugs down Kakashi’s mask, brushing their lips together. Kakashi’s hand wraps around the back of his head and pulls Iruka closer, deepening the kiss.

He’s very much aware of the three ANBU that have been hanging out nearby and Iruka probably would be too if Kakashi wasn’t doing his best to figure out if he has an esophagus and how far down it goes.

He senses one of them lose control of his chakra grip and fall off the side of the Tower and resists the urge to smile.

Kakashi gently breaks the kiss and slides his mask up before bumping their noses together.

“You’re an idiot,” Iruka says affectionately.

“Maa, but I’m *your* idiot”

“It seems that way,” Iruka shakes his head.

“I’ve always been your idiot,” Kakashi says with a wink, dropping off the roof. “Love you”

“Love you,” Iruka shakes his head fondly, “I’ll see you tonight”

Kakashi leaps onto the roof, hands in his pockets and grins at the ANBU.

“Kakashi-sama…how long?” comes the drawling voice.

This one is definitely Shikamaru.

“Take a guess”

“I wouldn’t even begin to be able to guess”

“Before your Chunin Exam”

The other ANBU misses a step and slips off the roof in shock.

Kakashi whistles as he ducks under an awning and shakes off the other two with a clone.

So much fun.

Chapter End Notes

> why do i always make anbu fall off things in shock? idk man. but the thought of elite ninja being shocked into incompetency is hilarious to me

Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

For those who haven't watched Boruto:

Kaminarimon Denki: a kid in Boruto's class. Heir to a large and famous company. Shy, low self-esteem, easily pushed around by his dad and everyone else, good at fuinjutsu but not super great at other ninja skills and has low chakra reserves, incredibly technologically savvy. Maybe a tech genius. Wants to become more confident.

Yuino Iwabe/Iwabee: also in Boruto's class. Top marks in ninja skills but shit when it comes to book learning so he got held back twice bc he failed all his graduation tests which made him become rebellious and slack off even more. Blunt, short-tempered, thinks being strong is all that matters for a ninja, aggressive at first. Mellows out eventually bc of Boruto's Protagonist Power and becomes loyal to friends and willing to try harder at studying (even tho he still sucks at it).

He and Denki tutored each other.

They're on the same genin team and their jonin instructor is Udon (who has developed an incredibly disgusting and hilarious BAMF jutsu ngl)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Sensei"

"Rokudaime-sama," Iruka says in a mildly warning tone.

Kakashi blinks. He had completely missed the brat sitting next to Iruka on the couch.

A brat that Kakashi is pretty sure graduated, considering he remembers thinking the kid had a pretty good head for fuinjutsu.

He has papers spread out and Kakashi peeks closer.

"Fuinjutsu?" he tilts his head.

"Rokudaime-sama!" the kid scrambles to his feet and bows, clumsy in

his excitement.

“Denki here is very talented at fuinjutsu,” Iruka muses. “He came to ask me for advice”

“I didn’t know Principal Umino specialized in it,” Denki says, a little shyly, “Udon-sensei said I should talk to him if I was interested”

“I see,” Kakashi smiles, “indeed, Principal Umino is the village’s foremost fuinjutsu expert”

“I-I’m not,” Iruka shakes his head.

“I’ve said this before,” Kakashi says, “I’ll say it until you believe me. No one else in the village is nearly as skilled as you”

“Wow,” Denki stares up at Iruka with wide eyes. Iruka blushes.

“Rokudaime-sama, what are you doing here?” Iruka asks. Kakashi knows not to push the matter of title in front of students.

But then he remembers this kid is no longer a student. And they had decided that they weren’t going to hide it anymore.

“Well, I had something to ask you, but it can wait until we get home,” Kakashi waves a hand dismissively.

Like he thought, the kid is smart because confusion flickers across features still round with baby fat and he blinks.

“Principal Umino. You live with the Rokudaime?”

“Ah,” Iruka flushes, scratching his scar, “I do”

“We’re actually married,” Kakashi grins even though he knows the kid can’t see it. “Have been for years”

It’s fun watching people react to the revelation. Denki is no exception. The kid stares between them with large eyes. Instead of openly react he watches as the kid stares at his fuinjutsu notes, a complicated expression on his face.

Iruka looks up at Kakashi in confusion. Kakashi shrugs.

“Denki,” Iruka rests a hand on one of the kid’s shoulders, “is there something you want to ask?”

He opens his mouth, closes it, opens it again.

“Um. How did,” he fiddles with the edges of his page, “you’re both guys,” Denki says as if trying to find the words. “How did you know?” he looks at Iruka first, clearly reaching out to the more familiar figure.

Oh. Kakashi crosses the room to sit on the couch across from Iruka.

“How did I know I liked guys? Or how did I know I liked Kakashi?” Kakashi notes the dropping of honorifics.

“Both,” Denki blurts out, “um,” he blushes, “I think I like someone”

Iruka and Kakashi exchange another glance.

“And this someone is another guy?” Iruka prods gently. Denki nods.

“But I can’t tell my dad,” Denki says, folding and unfolding the edge of the chakra paper anxiously, “he…wouldn’t understand”

“Well, Kakashi and I…” Iruka trails off, clearly unsure how to explain their relationship to a former student.

“We didn’t get along at first,” Kakashi says. Both of them turn to look at him. “We fought all the time. If you ask any shinobi our age about our relationship, they would say we hated each other”

“Really?” Denki blinks, “I guess…that’s how it was for me too,” the folding gets faster, “but he…he didn’t like anyone much. Now. Well, we got closer and now I don’t know. I’ve never. I mean, I think girls are super pretty and I like girls too but it’s different? I don’t know how to explain it”

“I didn’t like anyone before Iruka,” Kakashi admits. Iruka looks at him in surprise. “It was only after getting to know him”

“I had a few people I liked,” Iruka admits, and Kakashi knows who exactly he’s thinking of and he hates it, “Denki-kun, you know that you can like both boys and girls, right?”

“I can?” Denki blinks.

“Yes,” Iruka smiles, “it’s also possible that you don’t like someone until after getting to know them,” he flicks his gaze to Kakashi, “if Kakashi-san and I had never gotten close after Naruto left, nothing may have changed between us”

“Really?” Denki blinks.

“Yup,” Kakashi smiles, “after Naruto left to train with Jiraiya, we ended up gravitating towards each other and it just went from there,” he decides to leave out their friends with benefits relationship for the year leading up to Naruto’s departure.

“My father wouldn’t be accepting of it,” Denki admits, “but maybe he would if he knew that the Rokudaime was married to another guy”

Kakashi blinks. He hadn’t even thought of that.

“How did you know?” Denki asks, “that you guys liked each other? Or that, you knew that. I don’t even know if he likes guys? Or, both,” he fidgets with his sleeves, “and he’s my teammate and my friend so I don’t want to make things awkward”

Realization flashes across Iruka’s face and Kakashi knows his husband knows who Denki’s crush is.

“I…don’t know if our example is the best one to follow,” Iruka admits. Kakashi scrubs a hand through his hair. They really are not the best example to follow.

“Just casually bring it up in conversation,” Kakashi suggests. They both look at him. “Figure out what he’s interested in and then go from there”

“You also never have to say anything if you don’t want,” Iruka offers. “You can always wait”

Denki looks at his hands thoughtfully before nodding.

“I think I get it,” he looks up, eyes wide. “I think I’m not gonna tell him yet. Maybe after we all make chunin!” he glances up at Iruka, as if confirming that’s a good idea.

Iruka smiles warmly and rests a hand on the kid’s head. Kakashi thinks it’s adorable that even after graduation, even though Iruka hadn’t been their actual teacher, that the kids still looked up to him in some way.

“If that’s what you think is best,” Iruka says, “then that’s what you should do”

Denki bids them farewell and leaves, looking a bit lighter, bouncier on

his feet.

“Ah, young love,” Kakashi laughs, moving to sit next to Iruka and gently taking his hand. “We were never like that, were we?”

Iruka snorts, resting his head on Kakashi’s shoulder.

“Not even close,” he says, fondly amused, “although, Denki and Iwabee didn’t start off friends either”

“I doubt they were quite as bad as we were”

“The only time we didn’t fight was when you had your tongue down my throat!” Iruka laughs.

“Or my cock,” Kakashi says smugly, kissing his temple. Iruka smacks him in the arm.

“Anata!”

A soft, almost horrified sound comes from the door and they both look up. Denki is standing in the open doorway, a hectic flush across his cheeks and staring anywhere but at Kakashi and Iruka.

“I, um,” Denki points to the little computer sitting on the edge of the table.

“Right,” Kakashi says, glancing at Iruka who looks mortified, refusing to look in Denki’s direction.

The kid grabs the device and with one last quick glance at them, flees the room.

“Oh my god,” Iruka buries his face in his hands, “this is why I said never at the Academy”

Kakashi bites his tongue to keep from laughing because otherwise he’s going to be sleeping on the couch.

Chapter End Notes

Getting close to the end two more chapters left

Chapter 21

Kakashi is still pulled in by his miniature.

As much as he hates to admit it, he really does see a lot of himself in the kid. In his opinion, that's not a good thing. He doesn't want the kid to fall into bad habits like he had.

Hoki and his team have been running ANBU missions. Sure, they were essentially genin level missions and mostly comprised of reconnaissance and information gathering, but they're still a far cry from the average D-rank missions their classmates are going on. He had watched Hoki pass the Chunin Exams despite his teammates not passing with him.

Kakashi knows this means Hoki will be assigned either solo missions or teamed up with ninja who he probably would never get close to. Kakashi knows the dangers of isolation like that, especially on a kid like Hoki.

He decides to step in as Hatake Kakashi instead of Sukea. The kid idolizes *him* after all. Maybe Kakashi could help keep him from making the same mistakes Kakashi did.

It's not hard to find the kid. He's training in the ANBU training ground when Kakashi finds him.

"Hey, Taketori Hoki, right?"

"R-Rokudaime-sama!" Hoki blurts out, stumbling over his own feet, visible eye large and nervous as he bows. "What-" he swallows, "what are you doing here?"

"Well, Sukea-san had mentioned your name not too long ago and he wanted to know how you were doing, but he's not in Konoha right now so I told him I would check for him," Kakashi slides his hands in his pockets, "walk with me?"

The kid stumbles over his own feet again in his hurry to match pace with Kakashi. Kakashi slows down his stride to keep up with the shorter legs.

"He said you and your team got off to a bit of a rough start"

"Yeah," much to Kakashi's amusement, Hoki puts his hands in his

pockets and tries to mimic his slouch, “but Sai-sensei, he’s really good. He’s teaching us a lot of things that we probably wouldn’t have learned,” he bows to Kakashi and nearly topples forward, “Sai-sensei had said you recommended he take us on”

“I did,” Kakashi tilts his head, “from what Sukea-san said about your team’s skills, your potential was being completely wasted otherwise. How is your team working now?”

“It’s really…our skills are really good together,” Hoki stares up at him painfully earnest, “and Sai-sensei, the missions we go on…” he trails off.

Kakashi rests a hand on his fluffy hair and watches as the visible quarter of his face turns pink. “It gets easier,” he says quietly. “And it gets harder. Did you know, I was made ANBU captain at thirteen?”

“Th-Thirteen?” his eye is even larger.

“Now that you’ve graduated as chunin, you’ll be assigned harder missions. ANBU may seem like a solitary role, and it is, the missions are highly classified, but you’re not alone. Sukea-san said he told you about my friend”

Hoki nods. “He said the best time to apologize is now because there may not be another chance”

“Good advice. I’m going to give you some more”

He’s pretty sure that if Hoki could, he’d be taking notes as furiously as Mini Gai did. It’s more than a little entertaining.

“Rely on your team. Hako and Renga, especially. Even Sai-san. It’s easy to get lost in ANBU, to forget who you are outside the mask. Do what needs to be done. Shut off emotions when you need to. But don’t keep everything to yourself. Make friends outside ANBU too”

Hoki has a thoughtful expression and he looks up at Kakashi with that too-earnest blue eye.

“Rokudaime-sama…”

“Hm?”

“Thank you,” Hoki bows, “I…” he trails off, looking like he wants to say something but is scared to look like he can’t handle things.

“Go on,” Kakashi urges, “I’m sure whatever it is, it’s been thought before”

“I was scared,” Hoki admits, “now that I’m chunin. The missions I’m going to go on…that I’ll be alone without Hako and Renga”

“You may work solo, or be placed on other teams occasionally,” Kakashi nods, “especially since Hako and Renga are still genin. But part of your team’s success is how your abilities work together, so it won’t be forever. And it’s important to keep your bond strong”

“Can I ask…” Hoki glances at the ground, “why did you leave ANBU?”

“The Sandaime Hokage pulled me out to be a jonin instructor instead,” not the whole truth but enough of it.

Hoki looks up at him, a renewed determination in his eye. “I’m going to be an amazing shinobi like you, Rokudaime-sama!”

Kakashi scratches the back of his head.

“Maa, I’m glad you think so,” he says, “but don’t make the same mistakes I did, and you’ll be a better one”

Hoki does a funny little hop and Kakashi reaches out to ruffle his hair again.

They pass by a bookstore and Hoki’s attention is drawn to a bright orange book on display.

“Oh! Rokudaime-sama! Isn’t that the book you were always reading?”

Kakashi stares at the book like it’s betrayed him. He hasn’t seen an original Icha Icha Paradise in years and yet here it is.

He wonders if this is Jiraiya screwing with him from the afterlife.

The interested gleam in Hoki’s eye doesn’t bode well for Kakashi’s continued existence should a certain someone find out.

“Ah, Iruka is gonna murder me”

Hoki’s blue eye widens. “P-Principal Umino?”

“Maa,” Kakashi scratches the back of his head, “he always disapproved of me reading these books, especially around kids”

“You’re friends?”

Kakashi decides he’s already incurred Iruka’s wrath enough.

“We go back a very long time”

Hoki looks thoughtful again. “Friends outside of ANBU, huh?” he says to himself. Kakashi thinks the kid will be fine.

“It’s been fun chatting, Hoki-kun,” the visible skin turns red, “but I have to go now,” he rests a hand on Hoki’s fluffy hair, “remember what I said about making friends and relying on your teammates. And always remember this: those who abandon their comrades are worse than trash,” Hoki nods enthusiastically and Kakashi can’t help his grin. “Come find me if you ever need to talk”

“Th-Thank you, Rokudaime-sama!” the kid bows so hard he almost falls over. Kakashi tries not to laugh. No wonder Gai was so attached to Mini Gai. It’s kind of fun having someone who idolizes you.

He watches the boy run into the bookstore and grimaces as he takes the orange book off the shelf almost reverently. Kakashi watches as he opens it, reads for all of two seconds and slams it shut with a too-wide gaze.

Ah. He’s pretty sure his coolness points have just dropped. He hops onto the roof and watches as the boy peeks into the book again, visible quarter of his face bright red.

Maybe he really should introduce his miniature to Baby Mini Gai at this point. *Hm.* Maybe he should challenge Gai into a challenge of his miniature and Gai’s grand-miniature.

But first he should probably explain his failing to Iruka.

He finds his husband, a thrill goes through his chest at the fact he can call him his husband, standing at a fruit vendor in the middle of the very busy marketplace.

An idea strikes him and he decides either he’s gonna get his ass handed to him by the perky and mercurial tokubetsu jonin he can now call husband or all of Konoha will finally know about them.

Feeling mischievous and slightly nervous, he lands behind Iruka, grips his wrist, spins him around and presses a quick masked kiss to his lips.

Iruka stares, wide-eyed. The rest of the market has gone silent.

“Anata…?”

“Just wanted to kiss my husband,” Kakashi says, loud enough that his voice drifts over the silent crowd.

Iruka’s cheeks flare burgundy.

A wail goes up from a stall down and everyone turns to look at where Ebisu has fallen to his knees, tears sliding down his cheeks.

“Okay then,” Kakashi blinks.

Iruka looks mildly concerned before it passes. “He’ll be fine,” he pats Kakashi’s shoulder before taking his hand, entwining their fingers together like it’s a totally normal occurrence and not at all like they’re being stared at by half the village or that Kakashi’s heart is doing backflips in his chest.

“I think the last thing I have to get is tomatoes,” Iruka hums, pulling Kakashi along as he consults his list. “Unless there’s anything you wanted?”

“I could make eggplant miso tonight,” Kakashi responds, easily falling in step with the shorter man and ignoring the stares.

Seconds later a cheer goes up that shakes the building and drowns out Ebisu’s wails.

That went surprisingly well, Kakashi thinks as people begin to chatter to each other.

Iruka sends him a sidelong glance laced with a familiar mischief and Kakashi falls impossibly more in love.

Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Is it true?”

“Hm?” Kakashi looks up from where he’s lounging outside the Mission Desk, reading his book on warring samurai tribes in the Land of Iron.

Shizune is staring at him in bemusement.

“You and Iruka-sensei. Is it really true?”

“Really true,” Kakashi confirms.

“Twenty years?”

“Give or take,” Kakashi shrugs, “he didn’t realize we were dating for a couple of years”

“You know, Tsunade-sama suspected it?”

“Really?” Kakashi raises an eyebrow.

“She said there was far too much tension between the two of you to simply be animosity”

“Maa,” Kakashi grins, “maybe we should have sent her a wedding invitation”

“W-Wedding-?” Shizune chokes out.

“Eight years, actually,” Kakashi grins behind his mask. “There wasn’t really a formal wedding though. We just signed some papers,” he holds up his hand and the chakra circling his ring finger lights up a soothing blue.

Shizune looks like someone smacked her in the face with a dead fish. She turns on her heel and leaves the room, clearly trying to process everything.

Kakashi isn’t surprised that the rumor has made its way throughout Konoha. There’s something oddly relieving about this fact.

He turns back to his book, waiting for Iruka to finish his shift.

Fortunately it's a morning shift, since they have Important Things like dinner with some friends.

He perks up at Iruka's voice bidding farewell to his fellow desk workers and then the door is opening.

"Anata," Iruka's smile makes the lines at the corners of his eyes crinkle charmingly, "have you been waiting?"

"Of course," Kakashi jumps from the windowsill, landing lightly. "How was your shift?"

"Well, Genma just spent the last hour screeching at me like an angry bird," Iruka laughs. Kakashi catches his hand, brushing a masked kiss to the back, uncaring about who may see, before twining their fingers together. "I think there's more than a few hurt feelings though," Iruka sighs, "I didn't think it would get this far so I never even thought about it"

"What did you expect to happen?"

"You'd get bored of me," Iruka laughs, scratching at his scar in a way he hasn't done in years. "And then next thing I know it's been twenty years and we're filing marriage paperwork"

"You know I would have been more than happy to file marriage paperwork long before I became Hokage?" Kakashi says, feeling irrationally nervous. "I knew after Pain's attack that the only one I would ever want was you but you were so uncertain about us and I didn't want to push you into anything. I was hoping you would realize on your own how stupidly in love I was"

"I honestly had no clue," Iruka looks at him with his large brown eyes, "not until that day you told me"

"Maa, sensei, I wasn't exactly subtle"

"We could have been married a long time by now then," Iruka laughs softly, squeezing Kakashi's hand, "I think I loved you even before then but I kept thinking you'd get bored of me so I didn't say anything"

Kakashi laughs. "You know, we give everyone else grief over not figuring it out, but we weren't much better, were we?"

“I guess not,” Iruka shakes his head ruefully and Kakashi lifts his hand to kiss his fingers as they step outside the Tower.

“R-Rokudaime-sama? P-Principal Umino!?”

“Maa, Hoki-kun,” Kakashi grins and winks at the kid who is staring at them in shock and holding…an orange book. *Shit.* “What are you up to?”

“Meeting Hako and Renga,” his gaze darts rapidly between them. “Um-”

“Just ask, Hoki-kun,” Kakashi laughs.

“Are the two of you-”

“Married, actually,” Kakashi says casually. He thinks that Hoki’s eye is going to fall out of his face with how wide it is.

“How-”

“Married? Eight years. Together for twenty”

Hoki looks thoughtful.

Once Kakashi’s Mini Me is gone, Iruka turns to look at him and Kakashi knows that look. He hasn’t seen that look since Team 7 were genin. But it’s a familiar look.

“Anata, was that-?”

“I didn’t do it!” Kakashi says, holding his hands up, “really! I don’t even know why that bookstore had it. They went out of print years ago. Probably Jiraiya trying to get me into trouble with my husband”

Iruka’s entire face flares a shade of burgundy Kakashi hasn’t seen since the days of provoking him at the Mission Desk and the ire visibly drains out of him as his gaze flickers away and he holds the back of his hand to his mouth.

“Oh?” Kakashi says, feeling gleeful. Iruka turns a darker red. “Did you like that, *husband*?”

“Anata…” Iruka hides his face in his hand.

“Do we have a new kink, husband?” Kakashi asks.

Iruka lets out a strangled sound. “Kakashi!” he puts his hands on his hips in a familiar gesture. “You cannot say these things in public! Honestly, you’re always like this! And now you’ve managed to corrupt an entirely new generation-”

Kakashi catches sight of Konohamaru and Udon watching amusedly as Iruka chastises him over his inappropriate behavior.

“Rokudaime-sama is always in trouble with his husband,” he hears someone say, amused.

Iruka’s cheeks burn red and Kakashi stifles his amusement as he takes his hand.

“How cute”

“You know, my dad swore up and down that those two were a thing? If only he was still around…”

“My mom thought they hated each other”

“It’s a wonder no one saw anything sooner. Really, they remind me of my parents”

“Husband,” Kakashi tries again, watching Iruka’s blush darken. He’s going to have so much fun with this new development.

“I hate you”

“Love you too,” he squeezes Iruka’s hand. Iruka squeezes back and Kakashi pulls him down the sidewalk cheerfully.

“You know we’re going over to Gai’s for dinner tonight, right?” Iruka looks up, “Kurenai will be there. So will Kotetsu and Izumo and Genma and Raido. And you’ll get to meet Ranka”

“Ranka?”

“Anko’s boyfriend”

“Ah,” Kakashi is a little curious about the sort of man who managed to be in a relationship with Mitarashi Anko for nearly three years, “what are we supposed to bring again?”

“We?” Iruka snorts, “anata, you’re aware of my kitchen skills. *You* are going to be making gyoza”

“Right,” Kakashi remembers the ingredients in their fridge. He’s actually a little excited at the prospect of the dinner with their friends. It’s become an almost weekly thing in the past year or two. Their group of friends will gather at someone’s, usually Gai and Tenzo’s place because it’s the biggest, for dinner. It’s not always everyone and sometimes it’s more people than just the usual group. One time Yugao was there, and Ibiki has shown up a couple times with Shizune.

It’s a gorgeous spring day, Iruka’s cheeks match the colors of the cherry blossoms and his warm fingers are laced between Kakashi’s own and they’re going to have dinner with their friends later on.

He lightly swings their hands, earning one of his favorite fondly exasperated looks and he doesn’t care if all of Konoha knows how stupidly in love he is.

“You seem cheerful today,” Iruka remarks.

“Because I love you”

Iruka’s answering smile is soft. He glances around before pulling Kakashi behind a large tree. He quickly tugs down his mask and kisses him.

“You can’t possibly love me more than I love you”

Kakashi huffs a laugh, wrapping his arms around Iruka’s neck.

Twenty years ago, he would never have believed he could possibly be this happy, this content with his life. He has friends and family, hell he even has grandkids. The dark thoughts and feelings that have clouded his mind and heart for so many years aren’t gone, he doesn’t think they’ll ever truly be gone, but they plague him less and less as the years pass.

Sometimes he worries he’s caught in an Infinite Tsukuyomi because it almost seems too good to be true, but most importantly, he has Iruka who pulls him out of those thoughts when they sneak up.

Iruka, who is currently smirking up at him in the most attractive way.

“You want to put that to the test, husband?” Kakashi teases, feeling light.

“Bring it on, anata”

Kakashi kisses him with a smile as he flashes through the hand signs for the teleportation jutsu to take them home.

Chapter End Notes

ahhhh and it's done 🙈 thank you to everyone who stuck with it. this was by far one of the fluffiest things I ever wrote and that's saying something considering I can't write anything but fluff.

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